THE STATE AND LABOUR: PARTY REGIMES AND STATE-LABOUR RELATIONSHIPS IN THREE INDIAN STATES

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ABSTRACT

The role of the political party in power in mediating the relationship between the state and labour was examined The Indian states of Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal — each governed by a political party representing a different ideology and class coalition — were compared in terms of conditions for workers Other factors likely to affect the position of workers in the state, such as its industrial profile, and the strength of its labour movement prior to the period under study, were also considered

It was found that, although the nature of the party regime did significantly influence the state-labour relationship, workers were not necessarily better off under the most sympathetic and interventionist party The nature of industry in the state was central in determining conditions for workers Thus, the party in power influenced conditions for workers as much through policies not aimed specifically at workers, as through intervention in industrial relations.

RÉSUMÉ

On a étudié le rôle du parti au pouvoir comme médiateur dans les relations entre l'état et le prolétariat On a comparé les conditions des travailleurs dans les états Indiens de Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu et West Bengal, ces états étant gouverné par des partis politiques représentant différentes idéologies et différentes coalitions de classes On a aussi considéré d'autres facteurs susceptibles d'affecter la position des travailleurs dans un état, comme son profil industriel ou la force des mouvements ouvriers avant la période étudiée.

On a ainsi montré que, bien que la nature du parti au pouvoir influence significativement les relations entre l'état et les travailleurs, leurs conditions n'étaient pas nécessairement meilleurs sous des régimes a priori plus favorables et interventionnistes. La nature du tissus industriel de l'état était, en revanche, le paramètre qui avait le plus d'influence sur les conditions des travailleurs En conséquence, il est apparu que le parti au pouvoir influençait les conditions des travailleurs aussi bien par des politiques qui ne leur étaient pas spécifiquement destinées que par des interventions dans les relations en milieu industriel.

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

States in the Third World are commonly believed to play an interventionist role in the economy. In order to do this, they have had to devise a relationship with labour, among other groups. However, states across the world have varied in the manner of their intervention, and in the type of relationship they have entered into with various groups as a means to, or consequence of, intervention. The reasons for this variation may be manifold, having to do with the relative autonomy of the state from society, or with the nature of the social groups or classes to which they are tied. In electoral democracies, the latter factor is often reflected in the nature of the political party in power.

The intent of this study is to examine the nature of the relationship between state and labour in one Third World country, India, and to assess the consequences of this relationship for the labour movement. More specifically, my purpose is to make a comparative study of the role and effect of political parties in mediating state-labour relationship patterns in three important states of India, these being West Bengal, where a government led by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPM] has been in power since 1977, Maharashtra, where the Congress (I) has had a more or less uninterrupted reign; and Tamil Nadu, which over the last two and a half decades has been ruled by a regional, populist party. My hypothesis is that, within the constraints of an overall capitalist democratic framework, the parties in power at the regional level — often representing different ideological frameworks and class coalitions -- can, and do, develop different relationships between the state and organised labour. No doubt, such relationships are also dependent on the nature of the industries, the socio-ecological characteristics of the workers, and the strength of the labour movement in that region. However, it will be the endeavour of the study to isolate, as far as possible, the impact of the parties in power on state-labour relationships.

The task of the study will be, firstly, to identify the different patterns these relationships between state and labour take in the three states identified; secondly, to ascertain the extent to which these patterns are the result of the type of party in power, as opposed to factors such as the organisation and strength of labour in the state prior to the rise to power of the particular party, or the type of industries in the state and their structural location in the economy; and, thirdly, to assess the consequences of these state-labour relationship patterns for organised

workers, in terms of material benefits, but also in terms of bargaining strength and unity.

OVERVIEW OF SITUATION AND REASONS FOR STUDYING IT

The total number of workers employed in the public and private sectors in 1987-1988 was 25.7 million, equal to about 3% of the total national population. This includes all establishments in the public sector and all non-agricultural establishments in the private sector employing ten or more workers. Of the 25 million non-agricultural workers in 1985-1986, only 6.4 million or 25.6% were organised into some 45,067 unions. These 6.4 million organised workers constituted only 0.84% of the total national population. While the figures may have changed over the last few years, the proportions in each case are unlikely to be dramatically different. This study will focus largely on private sector employees, 7.4 million out of 25.7 million non-agricultural workers in 1987-1988 (see Tables 1 and 2 in Appendix).

In spite of their being a numerical minority, organised workers are far from insignificant in economic and political terms:

> Because they work together under one roof and live together in the same areas, they can be more easily organised than the scattered peasantry. Because they live in a more cosmopolitan atmosphere they are more receptive to new ideas and new patterns of behaviour. But most important is the strategic position occupied by the industrial workforce in a society which has decided to industrialise rapidly. Because industrialization is given such a high priority by the society, the cost of non-co-operation by the industrial workforce will be greater than it would otherwise have been. The contribution of the industrial workforce per head to the national income is much greater than that of any other group.[1]

In addition, in a parliamentary democracy, in cities where industrial workers form large working class constituencies, they are potentially strong electoral bases, and their interests impossible to ignore for any aspirant to power. Given these facts, there have developed more legislation and state and party organisations around industrial workers than around any other numerically similar group. As well, for the workers themselves, there exists a hundred year long history of organisation.

Despite the recent shift in academic interest, then, to the examination of areas such as the "informal sector", and unorganised workers outside the industrial sector, and despite the numerical insignificance of workers in the organised economy within the larger society, I still believe this study has a contribution to make. My reasons for this are three-fold:

i Trade unions are still the only organisations capable legally of imposing the interests of some segments of the popular classes on state power, through means that have more direct repercussions than the promise or withdrawal of electoral support which is the main means open to most other sections.[2] They are thus more than just mere lobby or pressure groups. They are also the only section of the popular sector that is tied to the state in so many ways through administrative structures and legislation. Thus the study will contribute in particular to the literature on working class organisations and their relation to the state, especially in the Third World, but also in general to the literature on subordinate groups and the state.

ii. Because trade unions represent an important locus for the playing out of the tension between the central role of the state as economic developer, and its need to obtain and maintain political legitimacy, the study will contribute more broadly to the understanding of state-society relations in two ways. It will enable us to (a) disaggregate the category of "state", by looking at the role of the political party in power in mediating the activities of the state; and (b) examine the specifics of these relations for a given group in society, on the assumption that, perhaps, there can be no generalisable state-society relationship across all groups in society. In this manner the study will serve to disaggregate the category of "society" as well.

iii. The study is important within the Indian context because, while it is widely accepted that the national trade union federations as well as unions at the local level are affiliated to political parties, and thus heavily politicised, there has, as yet, been no systematic attempt to study the effect of different parties in power on them. Apart from some interesting works on labour history (Chakrabarty, 1989, Newman, 1981, Murphy, 1981), and micro-studies of workers and their communities (Holmstrom, 1984, Ramaswamy,U. 1983), most of the writings fall into one of three categories: industrial relations — legislation, dispute settlement (Dhyani, 1970; Goyal, 1970, Chaturvedi, 1987); industrial sociology — the social background of workers, their attitudes (Sinha, 1984;Ramaswamy, E A. 1978); political studies that examine the links between the central labour federations and various political parties, and the consequent

fragmentation of the labour movement (Ramaswamy, E.A., 1979: Chatterjee, 1984,1980) Few of the works (except Ramaswamy's Power and Justice, and Worker Consciousness and Trade Union Response) attempt a multi-causal understanding or account for regional variations, or attempt to combine the insights from the works in the different categories This precisely is what my study aims at doing.

In what follows, I will briefly elaborate the second point made above, in order to locate this study within the theoretical context of the study of state-society relations. The third point will become clearer in the survey of the Indian literature and general background that will be undertaken in the following chapter

STATE, SOCIETY AND LABOUR

The dominant approach to the study of state-society relations in recent years has been the "statist" approach, for which "the defining characteristic of a political system is the power of the state in relation to its own society"[3], the strength of this power being measured in terms of (i) the ability to formulate policy goals independently of particular groups (state autonomy), (ii) the ability to change the behaviour of specific groups, and (iii) the ability to directly change the structure of society A possible example of a definition of the state from this perspective is Stepan's: "It is the continuous administrative, legal, bureaucratic, and coercive systems that attempt not only to structure relations between civil society and public authority in a polity, but also to structure many crucial relations within civil society as well."[4]

Increasingly, however, this approach has been felt to lack explanatory adequacy. It has been suggested that the statist approach "tends to overdraw the separation between state and society whereas what may be important for explanation is the nature of the institutional structure lying, as an ordering mechanism, at the intersection of state and society... what may be critical is the changing balance of social and political forces supportive of the state".[5]

More specifically in relation to state and labour, Pontusson[6], writing on Western Europe, criticises proponents of the statist approach on the ground that they treat society as a single entity and fail to take into account how relations between the state and particular groups differ. These relations are likely to depend on the nature and strength of the particular group, based on its historical strength, its present organisation and leadership, and its importance to

the economy.

Like most Third World states, the Indian state plays a central role in the economy, and thus in the regulation of the relationship between capital and labour. Even if one were to accept the view that the state is not autonomous from society, there are two broad approaches to how one could understand its reflexivity. It could either be seen as an instrument of certain dominant groups, such as capital, or as a neutral mediator between competing interest groups. The following arguments, put forth to counter the latter approach, to my mind convincingly demonstrate its lack of autonomy: The state has certain developmental goals of its own which require it to support the owners of capital, it is as well the single largest employer. Collective action has very different value for labour and for capital -- while the power of the former comes from being able to organise collectively, the power of the latter comes from its ownership of the means of production. Thus the regulation of collective action through laws and arbitration bodies has far greater consequences for labour than for capital.[7] And, in a situation where capital is scarce and expensive whereas labour is in surplus and therefore cheap, it is pointless to assume that they have equal bargaining power.

There are reasons, however, why while one cannot view the state as autonomous, neither can one view it as always acting in the interest of the dominant classes. While the Indian state plays a central and directive role in the socio-economic sphere, it has not always been equally successful in implementing its will, and its actual performance across issue areas has varied, a fact that many recent observers have noted.[8] The alternating reflexiveness or autonomy with which the Indian state has been seen to act vis-a-vis society caused Rudolph and Rudolph to characterise it as a "weak-strong" state.[9] Other commentators[10] have argued that the statist approach is inadequate to explain the reality of state-society relations in India, and that a more satisfactory explanation could, instead, be provided by looking at the interaction of state and society, an interaction that is always dynamic.

This dynamism in state-society interaction can be attributed to a number of factors. (i) The framework of parliamentary electoral politics requires that it take into account the interests of both labour and capital, among others, in order to obtain and retain legitimacy. As Crouch has argued, "it cannot be assumed ex hypothesis that the state will always act to support dominant interests. ..Various subordinate groups may gain access to the state through such devices as suffrage, pressure groups, or protest, with the result that the day-to day operation

of political power is by no means a mere reflection of dominant class interests. Indeed, in liberal-democratic societies, where votes are more equally distributed than material wealth, it may often appear that in daily affairs the state is a countervailing force against the operation of the market"[11], (ii) The fact that the state operates on, at least, two levels — federal and regional (state) — and that different parties with different electoral bases, organisational structures and ideologies may have power at the different levels at different times, suggests that the state may have no consistent position toward any particular societal group; (iii) The policy area and the manner in which the costs and benefits from that policy are distributed are likely to determine the acceptance of, or resistance to, policy implementation, (iv) Most importantly, the enormous size and diversity of the society on which the state must have an impact, suggests that the nature and strength of different groups in society become of crucial importance in determining the effectiveness with which the state can act upon them The strength of a group is assumed to be reflected in its influence in the state, with the party in power perhaps providing the link. It seems fairly clear, then, that while the state is far from neutral, the actual degree of autonomy available to any one government at any point in time is likely to vary greatly and is something that has to be empirically demonstrated in each case rather than taken as axiomatic and always the same.

The political parties in power at the regional level in India reflect at least three of the above-listed four sources of variation: they are vehicles of electoral politics, they are an outcome of the federal nature of the system, and they represent a variety of social groups and interests The unique role played by political parties holding power in the various states is a fact that Kohli[12] recognises when he compares performance with regard to the alleviation of poverty of three states where different political parties have been in power. Arguing that state autonomy is "largely a function of the type of regime wielding state power" — the difference between the state and the regime being that between a "deep structure" and "the relatively changeable aspects of how public authority is structured in relation to society" — he demonstrates that differing organisational structures, electoral bases and ideologies have led to varying outcomes While Kohli's interest is in whether regime types make a difference to the effort to combat poverty, the concept could as easily be applied to investigate the consequences of regime types for labour.

Under the federal division of powers, labour is a concurrent subject and, while most

major legislation has been central, some state laws have also been enacted In addition, implementation of legislation and adjudication are entirely state (regional) matters, in which both the political and permanent executive of the state (including the police) and the judiciary are involved While most labour legislation keeps the developmental objectives of the state very much in the forefront, each state government makes different concessions to the political goal of obtaining support and legitimacy. Thus, the state's relationship with organised workers can be operationalised in different ways, and must be understood in its specific manifestations and conjunctures.

FOCUS OF THE STUDY

The states chosen for this study — Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal — have a number of features in common They are among the most industrialised in India and were the sites of the earliest modern industries. Consequently, they have the oldest working class and a long history of labour organisation. They are socially and culturally quite distinct, however, and their political trajectories have diverged considerably over the decades since independence. This makes for an interesting comparison of the variables of interest to me

The variables used in this study were identified through a thorough review of the relevant literature on state and labour, as well as labour in general. Space constraints prevented the incorporation of the review into the thesis The review served to illustrate some of the themes that have been considered important in this kind of study and to suggest ways in which the relationship between the state and labour may be studied. The variables identified are as follows:

Dependent variable·

The dependent variable in the chapter refers to the pattern of the relationship between state and labour — whether the state is interventionist or non-interventionist, whether the intervention is in the form of cooperation, cooptation, or confrontation, whether the confrontation is relatively benign or repressive This pattern will be identified in terms of how and when the legal-administrative structures are used, and in what combination the elements of law and bureaucracy, ideology, and coercion are used The consequences for labour can be examined through a set of questions formulated by Banuri and Amadeo[13]:

1. Do workers have a right to organise unions?
2. What is the highest level of union organisation (plant, industry, region, country)? Are nation-wide unions legally allowed? Do they exist?
3. What percentage of the labour force is organised in labour unions?
4. Is there a closed shop system where only one union is legally permitted to organise the workers in a particular plant, industry or region?
5. Do workers have a right to strike?
6. What is the level of strike activity?
7. What is the level (plant, industry, region, country) at which the actual wage-bargaining takes place?
8. Is there direct participation by workers in the form of voting on the wage-bargain?
9. Is there a legal minimum wage?
10. Are there cost of living allowances?
11. Are there any other benefits, e.g. bonuses, social security, pensions, unemployment compensation, child care, etc.?

One may also add:

12. What concessions have been made by the unions on productivity (workloads) and worker discipline (dismissal, suspension)?
13. What is the manner of settlement of industrial disputes — conciliation, adjudication, repression, and what is the likelihood of the successful resolution of strikes? (The success of a strike may be in the form of such intangibles as a growth of solidarity and consciousness, a consequence not intended by the government's action, but a product of other independent variables such as the strength of organisation and the quality of the leadership.)

Independent variables:

The independent variables in the study are:

1. The nature of party regime (its history, organisational base, ideology and policies), and its electoral link with organised labour.
2. The type and structure of major industries: market — export or domestic; type

— light, heavy, medium, scale — small, medium, large, ownership — state, MNC, large business house, small local industrialist

3. The unity and strength of organised labour in the state prior to the particular party regime under study This will be measured both in terms of membership and in terms of its ability as a group to participate in politics and influence decisions in its favour. This will be influenced by the socio-ecological characteristics of the workers' recent rural origin or long urban residence, links with other occupational groups; nature of residential communities - homogenous or heterogenous, class as salient, or ethnicity, religion etc as salient.

My hypothesis is that the nature of the party regime in the state will be a key determining factor in the nature of the relationship between the state and labour, and that the type of industry and the prior strength of organised labour will be secondary factors in influencing this relationship I further hypothesise that workers are likely to fare best under the CPI(M) government in West Bengal, because of its social democratic ideology.

A major limitation of a study such as this, based on library materials rather than on personal interviews and observation, is the difficulty of gauging the real causes of a strike or of state intervention, or how much support the leaders have. I will, thus, be precluded from challenging explanations offered in existing reports by the fact of being dependent solely on them for information.

NOTES

1. Colin Crouch, Class Conflict and the Industrial Relations Crisis (London: Macmillan, 1977), 16.

2. Jon Kraus, "The Political Economy of Trade Union - State Relations in Radical and Populist Regimes in Africa," in Richard Southall ed., Labour and Unions in Asia and Africa (London: Macmillan, 1987), 17.

3. Stephen D. Krasner, "United States Commercial and Monetary Policy: Unravelling the Paradox of External Strength and Internal Weakness", in Peter J Katzenstein ed , Between Power and Weakness: Foreign Economic Policies of Advanced Industrial States (Madison

University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), 57, 60.

4 Alfred Stepan, The State and Society: Peru in Comparative Perspective (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), xii

5 Baldev Raj Nayar, "The Politics of Economic Restructuring in India: The Paradox of State Strength and Policy Weakness" (Unpublished, Montreal 1991), 2.

6 Jonas Pontusson, "Labor, Corporatism, and Industrial Policy: The Swedish Case in Comparative Perspective", Comparative Politics 23, January 1991.

7 Claus Offe, and Henry Wiesenthal, "Two Logics of Collective Action", in Maurice Zeitlin ed , Political Power and Social Theory (London: JAI Press. 1981).

8 Nayar, "Politics of Economic Restructuring"; Akhil Gupta, "The Political Economy of Post-Independence India -- A Review Article", The Journal of Asian Studies 48 (4), 1989; Atul Kohli, The State and Poverty in India: The Politics of Reform (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne H. Rudolph, In Pursuit of Lakshmi: The Political Economy of the Indian State (Chicago University of Chicago Press, 1987); Ronald J. Herring, Land to the Tiller: The Political Economy of Agrarian Reform in South Asia (New Haven Yale University Press, 1983).

9. L I. Rudolph and S H. Rudolph, In Pursuit, 1.

10 Nayar, "Politics of Economic Restructuring"; Kohli, State and Poverty.

11. Colin Crouch, Class Conflict, 15-18.

12. Kohli, State and Poverty, 28-29.

13. Tariq Banuri and Edward J. Amadeo, "Worlds Within the Third World: Labour Market Institutions in Asia and Latin America", in Tariq Banuri ed. Economic Liberalisation: No Panacea -- The Experiences of Latin America and Asia (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 174-175

CHAPTER II: THE INDIAN BACKGROUND

This chapter will serve both as a review of the Indian literature and as an introduction to the Indian situation. It will lay out the background with regard to the growth of the labour movement, the industrial relations framework and the nature of Indian industrialisation, against which the diversity of each state can be explored

Labour studies have scarcely been neglected in India In fact, there has been a host of studies on all aspects of labour. legislation, relationship to the state and to various parties, conditions, organisation, sociological variables, history, both of the working class and of the trade union movement. To review all of them would be not only impossible but pointless, for many of them are a repetition of facts and details, either about the industrial relations framework or about the political affiliations of various trade union federations. I will limit myself, therefore, to examining only those that are relevant to my own concerns

The chapter will be organised as follows. the first section will draw on relevant literature to detail the Indian content of the independent variables; the second section will examine the nature of the dependent variables; and the third will review in somewhat greater detail those works that have attempted multi-causal analyses similar to mine and raised concerns tha. have import for my study.

1: INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

A: NATURE OF STATE INTERVENTION

The state has influence over the lives and organisations of workers (i) through policies, bodies and laws designed specifically for the industrial relations arena, (ii) through policies/directives on production and national security, and (iii) the way in which political parties are articulated with the state. I will not discuss (ii) separately, because of constraints of space and scope, but will it subsume it under (i) as (b) ideology and (c) coercive mechanisms, after (a) legislative structures.

The most comprehensive accounts of the industrial relations framework are provided by N.N. Chatterjee's Industrial Relations in India's Developing Economy, P.P Arya's Trade

Unions in India, Growth and Recognition which deals specifically with the problems with the law as related to union recognition, S N Dhyani's Crisis in Indian Industrial Relations which studies the period of the Emergency and its aftermath, especially with regard to public employees such as the police and railway workers, and his Trade Unions and the Right to Strike which is a detailed exposition of the Indian industrial relations framework in comparison to those of the U K and the U.S.A Influential earlier works include S.K. Johri's Unionism in a Developing Economy on the interaction between trade unionism and government policy in India between 1950 and 1965, and Myers' overview of the entire scene, from the history and emergence of unions, to labour commitment, to politicisation of the unions, and to government response in terms of legislation and organisations, that was first published under the title Labour problems in the Industrialisation of India and later, with Subbiah Kannappan, as Industrial Relations in India

1. Industrial Relations Structures and Policy

(a) Legislation

Punekar[1] divides the history of state intervention in India into three distinct phases.[2]

Phase One — 1875 to 1928 — Legislation on Working Conditions: During this phase state action was confined mainly to protective legislation regulating employment and working conditions in mines, plantations and factories. The Workmen's Breach of Contract Act in 1859 sought to regulate conditions of employment. The Employers and Workmen (Disputes) Act in 1860 was designed to ensure speedy determination of certain wage disputes. The Indian Penal Code (1860) prohibited the employment of forced labour.

The Factories Act of 1881 was intended mainly at restricting child labour to children above seven, who were to do no more than nine hours of work a day, and were entitled to a week off in the year The significance of this Act lay in the fact that it imposed, for the first time, restrictions on the absolute prerogatives of management. The 1911 Factories Act imposed further obligations on employers with respect to health and safety.

The Trade Unions Act of 1926 was largely the result of the efforts of the labour leader N.M.Joshi and the pressure exerted by the British Labour Party. Under it, any seven workers could form a trade union and seek registration with the Registrar of Trade Unions. Registered unions were immune from civil and criminal proceedings arising out of the conduct of trade

disputes, and had to file annual returns of their membership and finances to the Registrar[3]

The measures taken in this period were mainly intended to improve recruitment, employment and working conditions; they did not protect wages in any way. As a result, the standard of living of industrial labour deteriorated after World War I. As Punekar states: "Although the state attempted to alleviate the oppressive conditions of employment and working conditions from 1880 on, protective legislation did not touch even the fringe of labour's economic grievances. Seething discontent continued to prevail among the working class. This was partly as a reflection of the state's rigid opposition to any interference with wages."[4]

Phase Two — 1929 to 1947 — From Passive to Active Intervention. The state began to favour limited active interference in industrial relations in 1929. This was necessitated by the growing unrest caused by the depression and by the intensification of the nationalist struggle. The Trade Disputes Act of 1929 provided for a conciliation apparatus aimed at the peaceful settlement of disputes.[5]

The Royal Commission on Labour was appointed in July 1929 to enquire into the existing conditions of workers and the relations between the employers and the employed. The Commission vehemently opposed any form of compulsory arbitration and suggested instead the strengthening of the conciliation machinery.

After 1937, some provincial governments increasingly used the Courts of Enquiry to settle disputes. But these efforts were not very successful in checking the rising tide of strikes, largely due to the Depression of the 1930s. The state response was to prohibit strikes and to make it obligatory for the parties to seek peaceful settlement of disputes. Since Bombay was the worst affected among the industrial centres, the Bombay Industrial Disputes Act of 1938 was enacted with provisions for compulsory arbitration.

With India's entry into World War II the entire concept of the state's role in industrial relations underwent a radical change. An emergency was declared, and under Rule 81-A of the Defence of India Rules, governments were empowered to prohibit strikes and lock-outs, to refer all disputes to conciliation or arbitration, and to force employers to observe such conditions of employment as the arbitrator decided. In 1943 provincial governments were empowered to take all necessary measures to prevent work stoppages in all establishments in which 100 or more persons were employed, and to open all closed establishments. The political intent of this order was to prevent any work stoppage due to workers' participation

in the national movement.

The government simultaneously also followed a more cooperative strategy. In 1942, for instance, it convened the Tripartite Labour Conference consisting of the representatives of workers, employers and the state It also set up machinery in 1945 that was responsible for such matters as administration of labour legislation, conciliation of labour disputes, and labour welfare, in undertakings over which the central government had direct jurisdiction, such as federal railways, mines, oil-fields, and major ports. The provinces already had similar machinery in the form of Labour Commissioners' offices. Attention was also paid to labour welfare through the setting up of fair price shops, canteens, and welfare funds in some industries such as coal-mining.

With regard to wages, efforts were made to secure unanimity of labour and management on questions such as cost-of-living allowances and minimum wages. A Labour Investigation Committee was appointed in 1944 to collect data on wages, conditions of employment, housing and social conditions. This passive approach was, however, no substitute for more active intervention, given the spiralling rise in prices. Despite payment of food allowances, bonus and ex gratia payments, the real wages of workers declined progressively during the war years. This — compounded by the fear of demobilisation and therefore unemployment at the end of the war, political instability and an increasingly militant labour movement — caused much industrial unrest.

To counteract the unrest of the immediate post-war period, a "Five-year Programme of legislative and administrative measures for the amelioration of the conditions of labour" was framed in 1946. This programme marked the beginning of modern labour policy in India and resulted in the enactment of most of the present important laws.

The Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act 1946 requires every establishment employing a hundred or more workers to have, and to make known to the workers, a set of standing orders defining the conditions of employment, classification of workers, shifts, discipline, and termination of employment.[6]

The Industrial Disputes Act 1947 revolutionised the whole industrial relations structure [7] It is the key piece of legislation that defines the role of labour, management, and government in industrial conflict. Its stated aim is the speedy resolution of any conflict between labour and management through, successively, conciliation, arbitration, and

adjudication.

The Act requires that fourteen days notice be given before a strike or lock-out can be declared in a public utility. The government has the power to declare any industry a public utility, and most large industries have been so declared

The Labour Department of the government sets the process of conciliation in motion when intimation of a lock-out or strike is received, or even before such notice is given, if the government apprehends a dispute. Conciliation consists in bringing the two sides together and trying to narrow and, if possible, reconcile differences between them through friendly persuasion The process of conciliation is supposed to be completed in fourteen days but this seldom happens. Strikes and lock-outs are forbidden from the moment of intimation of dispute until seven days after conciliation is over, but strikes often break out during the long drawn out process. The conciliation officer has very little power — he or she cannot even compel both parties to be present during conciliation sessions, leave alone ensure a fair settlement or compel both parties to accept an agreement. The success of the conciliation depends largely on the attitudes of the two sides and their willingness to come to an agreement.

If the conciliator succeeds in resolving the dispute, the resulting agreement is signed in his/her presence by the two sides and is statutorily binding on both. If no resolution is arrived at, the Act encourages the two sides to voluntarily submit the dispute to arbitration by an impartial third party. But this is only possible, of course, if the two sides are prepared to accept the arbitrator's verdict as final and binding; it is quite rare for parties who cannot compromise through conciliation to agree to arbitration.

Where arbitration is not acceptable to the parties involved, the only course open to the conciliator is to submit a report of failure to the government saying why no agreement was possible and giving the conciliator's own assessment of possible further steps to solve the dispute It is up to the government, at its discretion, to refer the dispute to adjudication, i e , to a judicial authority whose decision will then be binding on all concerned Adjudication in labour disputes is quite unlike adjudication in civil and criminal cases, because it is not open to either party to bring a dispute before a labour court or tribunal but, instead, is left entirely to the discretion of the government to decide whether a dispute merits reference to adjudication.

In this period, various provincial governments, too, passed their own legislation to

counteract the increasing militancy of labour.

The period from 1929 to 1947, then, showed a marked transition from limited and passive state intervention to a more active and direct intervention. This shift was more a result of discontent voiced by workers' and employers' organisations than of planning. The war gave the state an opportunity to exercise absolute power in the prevention and settlement of disputes. However, despite its considerable power in industrial relations, its policy regarding vital issues such as wages remained unaltered This soon proved detrimental to the workers' interests, for by preventing them from striking or subjecting disputes to compulsory arbitration, it deprived the workers of their only weapon to redress their economic grievances and rendered them extremely vulnerable to spiralling prices and the rising cost of living.[8]

Phase Three — 1947 to the Present — Wide-ranging Intervention. Punekar[9] argues that the character of state intervention underwent a major transformation after Independence in 1947, with the state intervening far more to meet certain socio-economic objectives aimed at achieving a more egalitarian society. While it is certainly true that the number of laws and measures to ensure the workers' welfare increased exponentially, their character is surely revealed as much by implementation and outcome as by the aims declared in the statute book, and I will leave an evaluation of this to the end of this section.

The state's policy was greatly influenced by the Industrial Truce Resolution adopted at the tripartite conference in 1947. The Resolution placed greater emphasis on the prevention and settlement of industrial disputes and on "developing a system of mutual discussion and by resorting to the existing statutory and other machinery in a just and peaceful manner". Secondly, it stressed the need for closer cooperation between workers and employers to maximise industrial production, and for better understanding by employers of the role of fair wages and working conditions. Lastly, it assigned to the state the responsibility to establish "machinery, central, regional, and functional for the study and determination of fair wages and conditions of labour, and fair remuneration for capital". It also required the state to consult labour "in all matters regarding industrial production".[10]

Based on the directives of this Resolution, central and state governments enacted a number of measures over the next few years, which can broadly be grouped as follows: (a) those designed to facilitate labour-management co-operation; (b) those meant to prevent and settle industrial disputes; and (c) those framed to improve wages and labour conditions and

welfare.

Labour-Management Cooperation: Attempts were made to solve problems of industrial and national importance through the tripartite Indian Labour Conference, the Standing Labour Committee, the industrial committees and other tripartite committees such as the Bonus Commission and the Wage Boards. Labour Advisory Boards were constituted at the state levels. At the plant level, the government required employers of more than 100 workers to set up works committees to "remove causes of friction between employers and workers in the day-to-day working of the factory and to promote measures for securing amity and good relationships between them". Punekar places the number of works committees at the end of 1961 at 1113, although he is forced to admit that many of them were ineffective.[11] A commitment to worker participation in management was expressed by the Joint Management Councils scheme recommended by the Study Group of Worker Participation in Management in 1956.[12]

Prevention and Settlement of Industrial Disputes: While the Trade Unions Act of 1926 and the Industrial Disputes Act of 1947 remained central pillars of industrial relations legislation, the latter was amended a number of times. The Industrial Disputes (Amendment and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act of 1956 attempted to reform some of the defects of the 1947 Act by introducing a three-tier system of tribunals Labour Courts deal mainly with personnel disputes over matters such as dismissal and disciplinary action against individual workers, the Labour Tribunal considers disputes having wider significance such as wages, and bonus, and the National Tribunal deals with issues of significance to establishments in several states The amended Act also provided for voluntary submission of disputes to arbitration, and for the enforcement of agreements reached through courses other than conciliation.

The unwillingness of the central government to reduce its role in the industrial relations sphere was seen in its allowing to lapse, with the dissolution of the legislature in 1951, two bills — the Labour Relations Bill and the Trade Unions Bill — which were designed to make collective bargaining compulsory.[13]

The Second Five year Plan period saw a slight shift in policy, with the Planning Commission acknowledging that while compulsory arbitration had helped to check the growth of industrial unrest, it had led to an increase in litigation and delays These effects were attempted to be counteracted through moral rather than legal sanctions that stressed voluntary

settlements based on mutual agreement, and "increased association of labour with management" [14] The influence of this Gandhian stress on consensual and morally guided politics, quite unique to the Indian labour scene, can be seen in the various codes proposed in 1957-58 by G L Nanda, the Labour Minister, who was a staunch Gandhian.

The Code of Discipline was voluntarily adopted by all the central organisations of employers and workers It laid down "specific obligations for the management and the workers with the object of promoting constructive cooperation between their representatives at all levels, avoiding stoppages as well as litigation, securing settlement of disputes and grievances by mutual negotiations, conciliation and voluntary arbitration, facilitating the growth of trade unions and eliminating all forms of coercion or violence in industrial relations".[15] The Code emphasised rights and mutual obligations of the parties in their daily conduct towards each other. Since it derived its strength from the moral support of the parties, its success obviously depended on their willingness to observe it.

An Inter-Union Code of Conduct was evolved to minimise conflict between union organisations and was approved by the Indian labour Conference in May 1958. The Code enjoined the central union organisations to respect the workers' freedom to join a union of their choice and to uphold union democracy It stated that "there shall be no violence, coercion, intimidation or personal vilification in inter-union dealings".[16] This code was to be implemented by the representatives of the four central labour organisations, with an independent chairperson, but was not enforceable by any court of law.

Labour policy in the Third Five Year Plan (1961-1966) was again influenced by G.L. Nanda who emphasised the various codes

Wages, Employment and Labour Welfare The Factories Act (1948) applies to factories employing ten persons or more if work is done with the aid of power and twenty or more if no power is used The Act makes detailed provisions for health, safety, working hours, annual leave with wages, and employment of young persons. Similar Acts to cover mines and plantations were also passed

With a federal government and constituent states at different levels of development, India has not yet been able to evolve a national wage policy. The country is too large and the unorganised sector too varied for the political leadership to be able to evolve a national level agreement on the acceptable norms for a national minimum wage, a prerequisite for any wage

policy. The difficulties have revolved around differences over a "fair wage" versus a living wage, a minimum wage, and a need-based minium wage However, some measure of uniformity and level of social justice has been sought to be achieved through, for instance, the Minimum Wages Act of 1948, the Payment of Bonus Act, the Payment of Gratuity Act and the Equal Remuneration Act. Since the Minimum Wages Act does not define a minimum wage, courts and industries tend to go by the definition attempted by the Fair Wages Committee of 1948, while unions identify it with the concept of a need-based minimum wage There are also non-statutory, national level and industry wise efforts at standardisation As many as 24 wage boards had been set up by the central government by 1984 and several by the state governments. Their recommendations, while non-statutory, have led to the standardisation of wages in most of the major industries in the country Being non statutory, though, the recommendations are implemented only because of government and union pressure. The fact that workers' and employers' organisations are represented on wage boards, means that their decisions are based more on negotiation than on the results of any objective method of wage fixation, such as job evaluation or work-study However, the wage boards are no longer very popular, with both workers and employers opting to fix wages through collective bargaining.[17]

By the middle of the 1960s it was becoming apparent that government policies were not having the desired effect in terms of industrial peace, increased production or an increased sense of participation among the workers. Doubts were being expressed about the tripartite set-up and all the union federations, including INTUC, began to demand fair price shops for workers. In the face of this discontent, the government decided to appoint a National Commission on Labour in 1966, the purpose of which was to make a comprehensive review of "the changes in the conditions of labour since independence" and of the existing legislative and other provisions intended to protect the interests of labour, to assess their working and to advise how far these provisions serve to implement the Directive Principles of State Policy on labour matters and the national objectives of establishing a socialist society and achieving planned economic development" [18]

Although the Commission's Report of 1969 did provide a comprehensive overview of the situation, some of its proposals were quite controversial. While recommending the promotion of collective bargaining and recognising that strikes and lock-outs are an essential

component of this, it recommended a curtailment of the right to strike. In addition to the already existing limitations on the right to strike in public utilities, it recommended a further division of undertakings into "essential" and "non-essential" services and suggested that the right to strike be withdrawn in the former. The categorization of services as essential was left to the government, which could do so as and when circumstances required a particular service to be defined as such Central government employees were also denied the right to strike. While it accepted the concept of a need-based minimum wage, it recommended that the undertaking's capacity to pay should be an important consideration. Also, it came to no decision over the question of verification versus secret ballot as the method of identifying a representative union.[19]

In 1969 the Essential Services Maintenance Act was passed which withdrew the right of public employees to strike. This was done even before the recommendations of the National Commission were released. A few weeks later, the Labour Minister, J.L.Hathi, in his address to the Asian Labour Conference in New Delhi, questioned the validity of the right to strike under the present circumstances, despite the fact that it was sanctioned by the standards set by the ILO, he said ". can there be a state guarantee for such a right which operates against the health and stability of the state itself?"[20]

From that time on, the workers' right to strike came under increasing attack both in the pronouncements and actions of the government. All the major strikes that took place in that period, such as the strikes by the Air India pilots, Life Insurance corporation employees, railway workers and so on, were dealt with firmly and decisively Under severe inflationary pressure, a virtual wage freeze was imposed by ordinance in July 1974; the government directed that 100% of all additional wages and 50% of increases in dearness allowance will have to be compulsorily deposited with the government. While no public position was taken on the question of compulsory arbitration versus collective bargaining, the government began to display an interest in bipartite collective bargaining and seemed to want to discourage tripartitism, for instance by discouraging wage boards after 1971 and allowing the annual Indian Labour Conference sessions to lapse from that year.

The watchword of the Emergency declared in 1975 by the Congress government of Indira Gandhi was raising production at a reduced cost. To achieve this it set up a National Apex Body to encourage bipartite negotiations between workers and management; reduced

minimum bonus and changed the bonus principle, and implemented a scheme of workers' participation in industry. Chatterji[21] writes that, while bipartitism had long been a demand of the trade union movement, it now came at the wrong time, for the restrictions on wages and bonus imposed by the government through the ordinances and also the official discouragement of strikes acted as significant constraints on the scope of direct negotiations between employers and workers. The scheme of workers' participation was aimed mainly at workers taking responsibility for higher production targets, rather than their involvement in decision-making.

The Janata government that came to power after the Emergency undid most of the above mentioned steps, but it too reiterated a commitment to industrial peace, increased production, and the need for the working class to "rise to the occasion", and failed to provide a radically new direction for labour policy. A bill to amend the Industrial Disputes Act of 1947 was proposed in this period and was rebuffed strongly by most unions as a "black bill" because it attempted to give more scope to third party intervention and less to collective bargaining.[22]

The return to power of the Congress in 1980, and the period since, has seen little change in emphasis, except for an increasing tendency to blame labour for the growing unprofitability of the public sector. In 1981, the Essential Services Maintenance Ordinance (ESMO) was passed. The ordinance defines essential services very widely, and empowers the Government to ban strikes in industries defined as essential services for six months, and to extend the ban, if necessary, for another six months. The definition of strikes is also wider than under the Industrial Disputes Act of 1947.[23]

(b) Ideology

The ideology of industrial relations has remained broadly the same throughout the post-independence period. It can be characterised as "developmental" in Shivji's[24] sense of the term, meaning that all political activities by the workers are required to be subordinated to the task of increasing production. The state is seen as playing a strong third party role in settling disputes. The Labour Codes and emphasis on labour-management cooperation are also indicative of a Gandhian idealism that ignores the realities of class, and prefers accommodation to confrontation. Nonetheless, the creation of the codes and the language of cooperation serve only to disguise the preparedness of the state to use coercive measures if necessary to maintain

industrial peace and production

(c) Coercive Mechanisms

Apart from legislation dealing directly with trade unions and their affairs, the government has at its disposal a number of other powers which can be utilised to affect unions.

Section 144 of the Indian Penal Code is a colonial remnant. It enables the government to ban meetings and demonstrations in specific areas, and is used quite regularly when trade unions organise demonstrations. The Preventive Detention Act was passed in 1950 in order to enable the government to hold communists who had been arrested under the preventive detention laws which had been in operation before the inauguration of the new constitution in 1950. It enables the arrest of any person who is suspected of being likely to act against the security of the state or public order. After the Chinese offensive in 1962, the government passed the Defence of India Act under which the government has almost unlimited powers to make whatever rules it believes to be necessary for the defence of the country. This is similar to the Defence of India Rules used by the British in 1942 to restrict strikes and wages and force establishments to stay open. A Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) has been created to prevent disruption and "sabotage" of production in public sector enterprises.

Limitations of Existing Industrial Relations Structure

Absence of Unified Labour Code: There exist on the statute book today some 118 Acts, many of which have been passed by state governments. The Acts deal with working conditions, both in general, and for specific conditions such as mining and plantations, employee welfare, safety, wages and bonus, social security, regulating certain categories of workers and, most relevant to this discussion, industrial relations. The various Acts have not been integrated into a single code, not even cognate groups of Acts, such as those on social security, because of the fact that there are multiple law-making authorities and great variations in the requirements of regulation from state to state. Many of the laws are also out of date.

Lack of Implementation: The neglect of implementation is one of the major problems with the industrial legislative framework in the field of labour as in other areas. For instance, although there exists a Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act 1970, contract labour continues to be widely and increasingly used, and its conditions have steadily worsened.

Information required to be given to the government is rarely submitted Licences and registration certificates required to be obtained are rarely applied for Inspectors do not inspect, or are willingly bought off. Contract labour continues to be used, not only in the small-scale sector, but even more, in the public sector and large-scale industries [25] Another instance of neglect is in the labour judiciary Iyer gives the example of Maharashtra where, in 1990, out of the total sanctioned posts of 38 labour courts in the state, 24 were lying vacant Similarly, out of the 26 sanctioned industrial courts, 13 were vacant In Bombay, out of the sanctioned 11 labour courts, only 2 were functional [26]

The Problem of Recognition of a Representative Union Registration of trade unions is not the same as recognition by the employer as the legitimate representative of the workers and the sole bargaining agent in case of disputes There is no national statute which provides for union recognition, although such provision was made by the Bombay Presidency under the Bombay Industrial Relations Act 1946. According to the Act, employers must recognise as the sole representative the largest trade union in an undertaking or geographical area, subject to its organising at least 25 percent of the workforce Following this lead, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan also adopted similar legislation, but when West Bengal attempted to do so in 1973, the statute was struck down by the central government The statute is not unproblematic, though, for it does not lay down how the size of a union may be determined. There are two methods that are generally used — verification of membership by a government official or reporting of size by the unions themselves Neither of them is foolproof, the latter obviously not so, but the former method has also been used to grant recognition to the union affiliated to the party in power, as in the case of INTUC unions in Maharashtra The adoption of a secret ballot to determine the representative union has consistently been avoided since Independence, as the Congress feared that it's INTUC affiliated unions would not always win[27].

Excessive Room for Government Discretion: It is now possible to see the role that government discretion plays in the system Firstly, the fact that it only requires seven people to set up a union means that more than one union can exist in any enterprise or industry Secondly, there is no provision for recognition of a bargaining agent or representative union, nor for a closed shop, i.e., forcing workers to choose a representative union This means that management can choose which union it wishes to recognise and, conversely, that any union can

start a dispute which then has to go through the entire conciliation and arbitration process. The government then has the discretion to decide which disputes it wishes to refer to adjudication. Given the multiplicity of unions that operate at the plant or industry level, it is not possible for all of them to be equally strong numerically. So, while some are management stooges, others are affiliated to various political parties, including the party in power. Small unions can survive because of the process of arbitration. If collective bargaining was the method of dispute settlement, only the strongest unions would survive. The government cannot ignore the views of a union on the grounds that it is too small or that it is a management stooge.

The government's involvement in industrial relations is Janus-faced. On the one hand, it is a dispassionate third party, empowered to summon the parties for conciliation, and suggest solutions to their problems and to force them to submit to compulsory adjudication. Thus it occupies the role of an impartial arbiter. On the other hand, the government is also an interested party because the political party which has formed the government has a labour wing which it is interested in promoting. The government can use its discretion to refer disputes to adjudication to benefit a particular union. The ability to secure a favourable reference for disputes has now come to be seen as a major indicator of the effectiveness and strength of a union.

ii. The Relationship between Political Parties and Trade Unions

Crouch points out that: "The history of Indian trade unionism is closely related to the history of the nationalist movement and that of the various political parties that participated in that movement".[28]

The Indian National Congress (INC) was founded in 1885 and for many years after its founding remained essentially a middle-class organisation. However, the Partition of Bengal in 1905, and the rise of Tilak as a leader in Maharashtra, created the conditions for the emergence of a more mass-based nationalist movement. Almost the first time that workers were drawn into nationalist politics was when Tilak was sentenced to eight years of jail for sedition; in protest, Bombay workers went on strike for a day. At the end of World War I, rising prices and the unemployment created by demobilised soldiers, the increasing proletarianisation of the rural poor, and the entry of Gandhi into the national movement, further created conditions for the national movement to turn into a mass-based movement.

In 1918, B P. Wadia, a colleague of Annie Besant in the Home Rule League, formed the Madras Labour Union, often considered to be the first trade union in India In Ahmedabad in 1918, Mahatma Gandhi took charge of a strike and turned it into a Satyagraha, and after the strike, into a union, the Textile Labour Union

The number of unions grew, and in 1920 when the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) was formed, in order to select a delegate to the ILO, 107 unions affiliated themselves to it. They claimed to represent some 140,000 members, although Crouch seems to believe that the figures are somewhat exaggerated In any case, he argues, AITUC did not come at the apex of a unified trade union movement, but rather, was imposed by the Congress leaders on a heterogenous collection of trade unionists, who themselves had been imposed upon workers whose loyalty to them was only slight and wavering While AITUC could be seen as the trade union wing of the Congress, the two had separate organisations and were not linked by any formal arrangement, and this remains the case with the trade union wings of all the various parties.[29]

The Congress had shown its support for the unions through financial assistance and through its sympathetic resolutions of 1919, 1920 and 1922. Strikes were conducted on industrial, and sometimes on political, issues. The close links between the national movement and the labour movement was symbolised in the fact that important INC leaders, such as Lala Lajpat Rai, C.R.Das, Nehru and Subhash Chandra Bose, held the post of AITUC President

There was no actual Communist Party in India at that time; the communists operated within the INC, at times in opposition to the Congress leaders They formed the Labour Swaraj Party, later renamed the Workers' and Peasants' Party, which functioned as a leftist pressure group within the Congress After 1923 the Communists began to be active in the trade unions and in 1925 formed the Communist Party of India (CPI) After 1926 a number of trade unions came under their control Chatterji makes the point that, for the communists, the workers were a natural constituency and one for which, unlike the INC, they had political and economic ambitions. In 1928 they organised a powerful textile workers' union in Bombay in opposition to a more moderate union led by N.M Joshi A major strike was carried out in that year and the next. Within AITUC the communists nominated a communist railway worker to stand against Nehru for the presidency in 1928; Nehru won by a narrow margin. The 1929 Meerut Conspiracy case led to the arrest of many communist leaders, such as S A Dange

and Ghate and Muzaffar Ahmed, who had been advocating the "rightist" policy of working along with other groups and parties, including the bourgeois-led INC. With this, the communist leadership passed into the hands of younger, more inexperienced, leaders such as B T Ranadive and S.V Deshpande who carried out the "leftist" policy of isolating themselves from the Gandhian nationalist movement. At the 1929 session of AITUC, the communists made certain radical proposals which were passed with the support of the left-wing nationalists. The passage of these resolutions led to the walk-out by right-wing moderates, such as N.M. Joshi, Mrinal Kanti Bose and V V Giri, who then went on to form a new organisation called the Indian Trade Union Federation, with 30 affiliated unions, claiming a membership of 95,639, while 31 unions stayed with AITUC, which claimed to represent some 92,797 members At a later AITUC session, the communists, finding themselves in the minority over the credentials of communist textile workers in Bombay, walked out and formed the Red Trade Union Congress The latter had only 12 member unions and, given the numerical weakness of the Communist Party and the fact that it had been made illegal in 1934, the communists began to return to AITUC.

Earlier, in 1922, the All India Railwaymen's Federation had been formed under the moderate leadership of Jamnadas Mehta It was affiliated to neither of the existing federations and took it upon itself to reunite the labour movement. Finding that it could not go very far with AITUC on this issue, it combined with the Indian Trade Union Federation and some other unaffiliated unions to form the National Trade Union Federation (NTUF) in 1933. With 47 affiliated unions representing some 135,000 workers, NTUF was probably the largest federation at the time. This move inaugurated the start of a more moderate period in Indian trade unionism NTUF's major point of difference with AITUC was its desire to be represented in the ILO and to be affiliated with the International Federation of Trade Unions. Isolating itself from the nationalist movement, NTUF concentrated on trade union issues, and was better received by the government For instance, N.M. Joshi was the nominated representative for labour in the central legislature and also a member of the Royal Commission on Labour. NTUF regularly represented Indian labour at the ILO.

Some trade unionists expressed the need for a separate party to represent labour, because the Congress had in its fold Indian business as well. However, no such party came into being, except at the regional level, with the Labour and Kisan Party of Hindustan formed

in Madras in 1923, and the Labour League of India in Bengal The people most likely to lead such a party at the national level had already become involved in the Congress Socialist Party or the Communist Party or one of the afore-mentioned regional labour parties

Under the Government of India Act of 1935, 10 seats in the central legislature were reserved for labour and eleven for industry and commerce In the provincial legislatures, 38 seats were reserved for labour These seats were to be filled by election through registered trade union constituencies or through special labour constituencies In the elections of 1936, AITUC- supported Congress candidates won 18 out of the 38 seats, which was more than any other single group had got. In most provinces, Congress ministries came to power, and some of the trade unionists became responsible for the labour ministries However, the Congress governments could not meet the highly optimistic expectations that had been raised by the installation of a popular government, and disillusionment set in among the trade union movement. A rift between the Congress governments and AITUC was prevented by the declaration of war in 1939.

The issue of whether to support the war effort created a split in the Congress between those who wished not to, and those, like M N Roy and his followers, who wanted to since they believed that the defeat of England by Germany would worsen India's chances of freedom. M.N. Roy therefore quit AITUC and formed the Radical Democratic Party and the Indian Federation of Labour (IFL) in 1941. With the 1941 invasion of the Soviet Union by Germany, the stand of the communists began to change and they declared it a "people's war" and argued that it should be supported. In July 1942 the colonial government released all communists from prison and legalised the CPI. Almost immediately, Congress leaders, who had just launched the "Quit India" movement, were arrested The communists thus came to dominate AITUC, and both labour federations — AITUC and IFL — supported the war Despite their common support for the war effort, the two federations continued to compete with each other over questions such as recognition as the representative union in various areas

The harsh economic conditions after the war, with price rises, scarcities, and unemployment provided much cause for unrest. The years 1946 and 1947 saw strikes become very frequent, and trade union membership rose by 50% in 1946-47 and by 10% in 1947-48 This increasing tide of industrial unrest had by now become the responsibility of the popular ministries, which responded by the imposition of Section 144, and resort to lathi charges and

firing Both the colonial government at the centre and the Congress government in Bombay introduced Industrial Disputes Acts which enabled the state to take a leading role in dispute settlement This further alienated AITUC from the Congress, and at the same time made Congress leaders aware of the need for a more supportive trade union front. The Hind Mazdoor Sevak Sangh had been set up in 1937, by a social service organisation called the Gandhi Seva Sangh, to train trade unionists in the principles and ideology of "Gandhian" trade unionism In August 1946, the Congress Working Committee passed a resolution which called on Congressmen to be more active in the field of labour and to make full use of HMSS. In November of that year HMSS asked all its supporters to affiliate with AITUC, but its strongest supporter, the Textile Labour Association at Ahmedabad, wished to remain independent. The Congress realised that it could not take control of AITUC, so in 1947 it formed a separate federation, the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC). Crouch shrewdly observes: "It would appear that the main factor that led to the foundation of INTUC was the transformation of Congress from a party of agitators to a party faced with the problem of running the machinery of a democratic state".[30] While independence as a goal had not been in contradiction with trade union activity, with independence being seen as a prerequisite to raise the standard of living of the workers, now the government had the responsibility as well of maintaining law and order and increasing industrial production.

With the departure of the Congress members from AITUC, it came to be dominated by the communists This further led to the withdrawal from AITUC in 1947 of those unions led by the Congress Socialist Party In 1948, the Socialists withdrew from the Congress to form the Socialist Party, and by the end of 1948, they created a trade union federation of their own, the Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS) Some of those who had attended and been dissatisfied with the founding conference of HMS walked out, and a few months later created their own federation, the United Trade Union Congress (UTUC) under the leadership of Mrinal Kanti Bose. The UTUC members were either non-party unionists or were affiliated to non-communist Marxist parties, such as the Revolutionary Socialist Party, mostly based in Calcutta.

Thus at the time of Independence, there were four trade union federations in India. In 1948 the Congress government made an inquiry into the memberships of AITUC and INTUC, the object of which was to verify which one was larger and should represent labour at ILO. AITUC claimed a following of 1,073,537 members in 872 unions, while INTUC claimed

1,033,614 members in 498 unions.[31] After a partial inquiry, the government decided that INTUC was the most representative union and should represent India at ILO. Whichever may have been the strongest union in 1948, there was no doubt that INTUC was after it.[32] By 1968, INTUC had 1163 affiliated unions and 1.3 million members, AITUC had 1005 unions and 600,000 members, HMS 274 unions with 463,000 members, and UTUC 216 unions and 126,000 members.[33]

In sum, the trade union movement in the pre-independence movement was inextricably tied up with both the Independence movement and the communist movement. The splits into various federations occurred either on ideological grounds, where the differences in philosophy made agreement on both long-term and short-term measures impossible, such as between the Congress and the communists, or on grounds of differences in long-term goals despite similarity in short-term actions, such as between HMS and AITUC; or on organisational and personal political grounds, such as between HMS and UTUC. And, finally, the assumption of power by the Congress required that it check "irresponsible trade unionism" and encourage a "national spirit and outlook"[34] among workers.

The 1964 split in the CPI into the CPI and the CPI (Marxist), resulted in the formation, in 1971, of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), affiliated to the CPI(M). The Bharat Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) was set up in 1955 and linked politically to the then Jan Sangh, later Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Following Chatterji[35], I will now proceed to examine (a) why political parties are interested in trade unions, (b) what the nature of the link between the two is, and (c) what the mutual costs and benefits are.

Why Political Parties are Interested in Trade Unions: Ideological reasons may be seen as uppermost for the communist and Marxist parties, "trade union organisations being valuable not only in developing and consolidating the economic struggle" but also as "a very useful auxiliary to the political, agitational and revolutionary organisations".[36] Similar ideological reasons may be seen to have guided the launching of the BMS, with its philosophy of syndicalism, by the RSS and Jan Sangh. In the case of the Congress, the decision was self-interested and practical rather than entirely ideological. From the start of its period of mass action it saw the need to build organisations among the workers, but it was only in 1947 that it decided, under Patel, to form a separate labour organisation of its own, on the grounds that

"all the foci of power in the country, including organised industrial labour, should be within the periphery of the Congress" [37] Besides, as mentioned earlier, this was seen as a practical necessity for a party in power, reflected in the call for "responsible trade unionism". There might also be said to be some philosophical basis, in the form of the Gandhian approach, which emphasised the common interests of labour and capital with each having its role to play and its responsibility towards the other.[38]

One might almost argue that a trade union wing has become part of the routine definition of a party, so that any emerging party has to form a trade union wing, in order to establish itself as a full-fledged party. For instance, the Congress (O) in West Bengal decided to sponsor its own trade union, the Shramik Sangh, because as a political party in West Bengal — where there is a large industrial working class and where almost every active political party has a union wing of its own — the Congress (O) did not feel at ease unless it, too, had a union link. Similarly, the Swatantra Party, composed predominantly of landlords and businessmen, decided in 1968 to enter the trade union field, if only to make the workers more "industry oriented".[39] These two instances reflect both the electoral and the economic importance of industrial workers. Obviously, the reasons for the involvement of various parties affect the nature and extent of their involvement in trade union issues. The leaders of CPI and CPM in West Bengal, for instance, are deeply concerned with their parties' activities on the trade union front, while the Congress has been only casually, if at all, interested in trade union affairs.

Nature of Linkages: The ideological linkage between parties and unions was mentioned above. This ideological linkage may be further strengthened by policy and organisational linkages

Policy linkages refer to the correlation between party and union policy, on the assumption that parties use their affiliate unions to carry out party policy. This kind of linkage is strongest with the communist parties and the unions affiliated to them Thus, for instance, the militant policies of CPI during 1948-1949, or during 1965 and 1969, were reflected in the militancy of AITUC in that period While the relationship between the Congress and INTUC has been less well-defined, INTUC has in general followed the Congress policy of prioritising industrial peace.[40]

Organisational linkages in the form of interlocking leaderships are also more prevalent between the communist parties and unions. Thus, of the 13 office-bearers of AITUC elected

in 1973, 6 were members of the National Council of CPI. In contrast, the Congress and INTUC remain organisationally distinct and do not have leaders in common [41]

Mutual Benefits and Costs: This depends to some extent on the nature of the linkage between the party and the union. Given the close policy and leadership linkages between the CPI/CPI(M) and their union wings, there exists a systematic pattern of mutual benefits whereby if either organisation is weak, the other tries to compensate for it In Karnataka, for instance, strong trade union activity by the Karnataka TUC among the textile workers in Davangere in the mid-1960s eventually enabled CPI to open a party unit there and capture 12 seats out of 35 in the municipal elections of 1974 [42] However, Chatterji goes on to argue that it is not possible to link trade union activities with electoral support, for the latter depends on the combined effect of the behaviour of a number of classes and communities, rather than a single one. While CPI and CPM have done well in West Bengal, for instance, the Congress (I), despite its relative lack of interest in trade union activity, has also got considerable electoral support among workers.

As far as the flow of finances is concerned, there is generally no regular or institutionalised flow in either direction. Although the Trade Unions Act of 1926 allows a union to have a political fund, few do so. However, unions do raise money for political purposes, for instance, to finance a meeting organised by the party. Political parties, too, have made financial contributions to union organisation, as for instance, the communists made to trade unions in the 1920s. In terms of leadership, there is definitely a flow from party to union. Most unions cannot afford to pay full-time officers, and much of their legal and administrative work is done for them by committed party members.[43]

B: NATURE OF INDUSTRY

History of Industrialization in India

Before the 1850s, the only modern industry in India was coal mining.[44] In 1850, railways began to be built around the port towns of Calcutta and Bombay, and in 1854, Calcutta was linked by rail to Raniganj, the coal mining centre In the same year, a jute mill was set up in Calcutta and a cotton-textile mill in Bombay. The coal industry was developed

initially by British capital and management, although by 1920, there was a shift, particularly in the small units, to Indian ownership and management The first jute mill had been founded by a Scottish entrepreneur, and the jute industry continued to be mostly Scottish owned and managed The railways were the only industry developed by the colonial government, to serve the needs of the trading firms and facilitate the movement of troops and supplies in case of unrest or famine The cotton textile industry was the only one owned and managed by indigenous, mainly Parsi, entrepreneurs As Myers and Kannappan underline, "For a half-century following 1860, the history of industrial growth in India is the history of the growth in these four sectors "[45] This changed somewhat with the establishment of the Tata Iron and Steel Works in Jamshedpur in 1911.

The First World War cut India off both from European and Chinese and African markets, and from imports of manufactured goods from Britain on which it had been made utterly dependent. The almost complete lack of organised industry in light engineering meant a trickle of inferior replacements to industries subject to heavy wartime strains.[46] Some light engineering industries were set up but were allowed, and even encouraged, to die out after the crisis passed The cotton and jute mills made windfall profits, but not much was reinvested. The Tata steel works grew steadily. Between the wars only the cotton textile industry expanded much, while in the light engineering industry, growth was slow. The Second World War saw some growth because it necessitated the setting up of engineering industry to supply machinery to existing industries like the jute and cotton mills, and aircraft and other war requirements However, it was only after Independence that a real diversification of industry into light and heavy engineering, chemicals, cement and new steel works, and later into pharmaceuticals and electronics — and its dispersal across other regions — took place.[47]

The nature of industry and the type of industrialisation that takes place have an influence on the type of industrial relations that emerges at the industry or plant level, on the type of leadership and organisation that emerges and, of course, on indices such as wages and other benefits By nature of industry I mean: (i) product, size and scale, (ii) centrality to the economy, whether rising or declining, (iii) ownership, and (iv) management practices, both in terms of industrial relations and in terms of technology change, automation and hiring practices.

i: Product, Size and Scale

A major distinction that can be made on the basis of size is that between the organised sector and the unorganised sector. The organised sector is that covered by the Factories Act and social security legislation, and has relatively skilled and well paid workers and strong unions, which are able at least to maintain the real value of wages and to protect workers against arbitrary dismissal The "unorganised sector" is a residual category comprising everyone except permanent, organised sector workers Often firms in these sectors are linked. Holmstrom provides a fine-grained account of the rise of these smaller firms, and their linkages to the larger ones, particularly in the newer automobile, electronic, engineering, chemical and fertiliser industries. For instance, he traces the links between (1) a firm which makes whole vehicles, (2) medium-sized ancillaries with long-term contracts for parts, (3) smaller engineering or plastic firms which take smaller orders and have to change their product more often and which try to diversify their markets if they can, and (4) very small firms with high mortality, dependent on irregular job orders While in the firm making the whole vehicles, conditions are easy to monitor, workers are unionised, and wages are relatively high, in the smallest firms wages are below the legal minimum, working conditions are bad, and workers are laid off if orders are short or if they join unions Although government policy is to encourage larger companies, especially in the public sector, to sub-contract and to set up ancillaries, this has not reduced the uncertainties involved in running such ancillary firms [48]

Between 1961 and 1971 the unorganised manufacturing sector expanded faster than the organised sector, especially in Bombay with the decline of the textile industry, and by the early 1980s about 40% of the manufacturing workers, in Bombay and Calcutta but probably elsewhere as well, were in unorganised sector firms To this should be added the, at least, 10% of workers employed by organised sector factories on a casual, temporary or contract basis, without any security or effective legal or union protection [49]

ii: Position in the Economy

The position of an industry in the economy, i.e., whether it is central to the economy's export earnings, and whether there is growing or decreasing demand for its products, will have an impact, particularly on the wages paid in that industry An expanding industry would be in a position to pay higher wages, as would an industry that was in a monopoly position and

could raise prices.[50] Until the 1950s there was not much variation in the wage rates in different industries within the large factory sector. But from the 1960s, with the entry of transnational corporations (TNCs) in high technology areas like petrochemicals and engineering, wage rates began to diverge. The new enterprises were soon paying 75 to 100% more than cotton textiles, which until then had been the trend setter.[51]

Writing on the structural variables responsible for the textile workers strike in Bombay in 1982, Bhattacharjee notes how the increased militancy of the workers at the plant level, of workers in the modern industries, such as engineering, transportation, consumer durables and chemicals, had a demonstration effect on workers in the declining textile industry as to the political and economic advantages of plant-level bargaining rooted at the point of production:

> Segmented industrialisation has led to a fracture within the unionised proletariat: on the one hand, a small but growing proportion of relatively young and educated workers in the modern highly capital-intensive (often multinational) firms bargaining militantly at the plant-level and securing relatively high real wages and exerting considerable influence over working condition outcomes, on the other, a large proportion of relatively older workers in dying industries (such as jute and textiles) who, finding themselves steadily more marginalised, have become an increasingly volatile segment of society.[52]

The uneven development within the textile mills was a primary structural determinant of the 1982 strike. It was also an important reason for the demise of the "recognised" union (an INTUC affiliated one) in terms of worker following, and it challenged union and factory politics of other established unions in the country.[53]

iii. Ownership of Industry

The ownership of industry, whether public, private national or multinational, can also have possible effects on the nature of union organisation. As we saw at the outset of the section, the jute industry in Bengal was largely British owned, while the cotton textile mills in Bombay were owned by indigenous entrepreneurs. A number of commentators[54] have pointed out that this gave rise to movements with very different characteristics in the two places. While in Bengal, the nationalists were prepared to make common cause with the trade unionists and thus give greater militancy to the union movement, they did not have the same grounds for militancy in Bombay.

Banaji and Hensman[55] explore this variable in their detailed study of 50 firms in Bombay belonging to both national and multinational capital. Their real concern, however, is with outlining an enterprise level theory of industrial relations, based on their finding that conflict and diversity of industrial relations experiences are better explained by differences in managerial style at the plant or enterprise level than by differences in ownership.

iv: Managerial Style and Strategy

Managerial style can be used to explain differences in length and frequency of disputes, as well as in the types of unions that arise within the plant. The management's propensity to negotiate is important, and Banaji and Hensman found that certain Indian-controlled firms and managements were less likely to display this propensity than were foreign-controlled managements. The Indian firms were more likely to use disciplinary action as a form of reprisal or to force employees to accept demands or to break unions — revealing thus an underlying management authoritarianism — whereas foreign-controlled firms used disciplinary action mainly as part of the bargaining or conflict process. The Indian firms were also characterised by a more hierarchical and paternalistic relationship between management and workers. However, it was not always the case that foreign firms were free of strife; among them, too, what made the difference was the managerial style. The nature of ownership seemed to have some impact, though, on the manner in which strikes were dealt with:

> In central government strikes the strategies used can plunge whole workforces into the nightmare of confronting a 'political' employer who can use the armed force of the state in a crude, authoritarian assertion of bargaining power. In the private sector, the two main strategies have been. (a) forcing divisions within the workforce so that some sections start favouring an immediate return to work, (b) the large-scale recruitment of strike breakers so that production is restarted and the strike never finally settled. It is worth noting that whereas most managements including foreign controlled managements .. would use, or at least try to use, strategy (a), only the more openly repressive groups of Indian employers (the millowners in the textile strike of 1981 ..) have resorted directly to strategy (b) [56]

In a similar argument, based on a study of labour struggles in Siemens, a multinational company, Radha Iyer suggests that large corporations can be viewed as "states within a state" (or, one might add, states straddling states). Each corporation has its own management culture, built on earlier production relations and organisational practices. When technology

changes, this creates an imbalance, and the production relations and organisational and labour relations culture needs to be changed accordingly. However, the corporation may not be prepared for such changes, thus resulting in unrest.[57]

E A.Ramaswamy[58] describes how by the late 1970s employers in traditional labour-intensive industries, such as engineering, metal work and textile, began to see labour as a resource that was both highly expensive and difficult to manage. For employers used to cheap labour, manning costs in excess of 25 or even 30 percent of total costs began to appear alarming The strategies evolved to cope with this situation included the farming out of jobs to labour contractors, the putting out system where certain lines of manufacture were scrapped altogether — and the product obtained from a smaller firm — so that the larger firm became almost a trading company rather than a manufacturing one. Another increasingly common strategy has been for enterprises in the organised sector to have on their rolls different categories of labour, which get paid differently and have different levels of security, for the same jobs While the permanent workers are the most secure, the other categories are badli, casual, temporary, apprentice and trainee labour. Manufacturing enterprises have also tended to expand employment in lower managerial positions at the expense of blue-collar employment. This is often accomplished by conferring a new designation on the top crust of blue-collar positions which transforms them into the bottom rung of the managerial cadre, without changing the content of the job or the remuneration. Given that white-collar workers are more easily coopted by the management, and are subsequently less likely to align with blue-collar workers, this strategy has the effect of weakening the blue-collar unions. Finally, there is the adoption of labour-saving automation, at the expense of both blue and white-collar workers. The strong opposition from both categories of workers has only managed to slow down rather than stop the introduction of new technology Managements have also made efforts to increase labour productivity by increasing the flexibility of labour deployment within the workplace, and by introducing "scientific" work methods

C: HISTORY AND NATURE OF PRIOR LABOUR ORGANISATION

The history and nature of workers' organisation may be seen as both a dependent and an independent variable Dependent, because at each stage in its development, the nature of

working class organisation may be seen as the outcome of the interaction of the earlier four variables. Independent, because past organisation creates the structures and defines the parameters of present day organisation In this section, of course, I am examining its role as an independent variable I will also look at the socio-ecological characteristics of workers, as a factor influencing the nature of their organisations

i: Organisational History of the Labour Movement

By organisational history I mean the history of the nature of unionism, the type of leadership, and the relationship between the leader and the rank and file. This is distinct from the official history of the various trade union federations that was presented in section I ii Organisational histories of this kind can be found in S C Jha's The Indian Trade Union Movement, and C.Revri's The Indian Trade Union Movement, the latter perhaps being among the best of its kind. I shall use the stages identified by Jha to describe the movement.

Pre-organised Trade Unionism (1870-1918): Revri describes how the beginning of spontaneous strike activity goes back to the 1870s, and records some of the important strikes of this period. For instance, between 1882 and 1890, there took place at least 25 important strikes in Bombay and Madras, and many more minor strikes He argues, therefore, that it would be a mistake to underestimate the growth of elementary class consciousness and of combined action among workers in this period. He quotes a British official, who wrote "The institution known to western nations as a Trade Union, with its printed rules and regulations, its subscriptions and regular accounts, is represented here by an unnamed and unwritten bond of union among the workers peculiar to the people "[59] The causes for the strikes during this period were the terrible working conditions, disciplinary actions by the supervisors and, of course, wages. This was the period of the first factory acts that had to do with regulating working conditions. It also saw the entry of the "social welfare" reformers into the arena

Organised Trade Unionism (1918-1926) The first unions were set up in this period, AITUC was formed and the work towards such legislation as the Trades Union Act of 1926 was begun. The period was also one of increasing labour unrest caused by the inflation and food shortages of the post-war years.

Militant Trade Unionism (1926-1939): The period between the wars saw a sharpening of both the nationalist and the communist movements, and the drawing in by them of workers

into militant action. Workers' militancy was also increased by the Depression- linked decline in employment and fall in wages.

Moderate Trade Unionism (1939-45). The colonial government as well as political unionists who supported the war sought to tame the unions in order not to disrupt the war effort. The ascendance of moderate trade unionism was symbolised by the representation of Indian labour at the ILO by N.M.Joshi, a reformist trade unionist.

Political Trade Unionism since Independence (1947-1975): The rivalry, bureaucratization of organisations, and prioritisation of overarching political goals rather than workers' issues, that characterised this period, have been discussed in some detail in Section A II

Structural Shifts and the Assertion from Below (Post 1975): A significant feature of this period has been the rise of independent unionists. Traditional unions are not only being challenged by rank and file workers within them, but by the appearance of a new breed of outside leaders, such as, the professional negotiator or hard bargainer like Datta Samant, who is not affiliated with any of the existing parties, and is not afraid to raise economic, rather than ideological, demands. There is also the challenge from militant leaders like A.K. Roy, and (the late) Shankar Guha Niyogi, who break through the legal niceties and traditional forms of organising These leaders head independent, radical but politically autonomous, geographically limited, popular unions, which unite different sectors of workers and peasants. These include the Shramik Sangathan of Dhulia district in Maharashtra, Chattra Yuva Sangharsh Vahini in Bodh Gaya, Bihar, Chattisgarh Mines Shramik Sangh (CMSS) in Chattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and the Bihar Colliery Kamgar Union (BCKU) of Dhanbad. All of these unions have attempted to link the demands of industrial workers, particularly contract workers, and agricultural labourers Most of them have arisen since the mid-1960s. Because they lack broader political affiliation, and because they tend to be more radical than the traditional unions, they have been the most exposed to the state's and capitalists' repressive actions. This was illustrated most graphically in the recent killing of the CMSS leader, Niyogi, on the orders of an industrialist whom his union was trying to pressurise to implement basic labour laws.[60]

II: Socio-Ecological Characteristics of Workers

By socio-ecological characteristics, I mean factors such as links to rural areas or

proximity to rural areas; literacy and education, and caste, religious or linguistic affiliations that unite or divide workers, and workers and leaders, as well as influence workers' support for particular parties The main concerns of researchers with regard to these characteristics have had to do with commitment to industrial work, the formation of a "labour aristocracy" among organised sector workers, and communal barriers to the development of working class consciousness and organisation. Holmstrom's Industry and Inequality deals with many of these concerns and, as a "social anthropology of Indian labour", is probably the best work on this subject. Meticulously researched, it describes in great detail working and living conditions, differences in family patterns in the various industrial cities, caste and religious feeling, relations with neighbours and so on. Other works that attempt to study industrial workers in their social context include Holmstrom's earlier South Indian Factory Workers and Uma Ramaswamy's Work, Union and Community.

Commitment: Early commentators on Indian labour held that, because of their recent rural origins, Indian workers were unable to stand the discipline of industrial work, and reacted by taking leave frequently, and going back to the village, thus creating "problems" in the industrialisation of India.[61] However, the argument has been quite firmly put to rest by the detailed historical research of scholars, such as Morris, who found that the "indiscipline" and "lack of commitment" that employers complained of, were the result of their own management practices, and the workers' rational response to insecurity caused by the competitive nature of the markets in which the enterprises operated. According to Morris, "The psychology of the work force or...the rigid traditions and structure of the rural social order" had little to do with it.[62] In fact, one might argue that, conversely, rural links have had advantages for workers. As Banaji and Hensman[63] make clear, geography is a relevant factor in industrial relations While workers in industries located in rural areas can hold out longer against employers because of the support they receive from family or friends based in agriculture, this is not as easy in urban areas. Similarly, Bhattacharjee[64] describes how the 1982 Bombay textile workers' strike was sustained for over a year because most of the workers, who retained their rural links, returned to their villages for long periods over the year, and thus were not compelled to surrender out of economic necessity.

A Labour "Aristocracy": This refers to the belief that the permanent workers of the organised sector constituted an enclosed "citadel", and saw themselves as distinct from, and

superior to, the mass of unorganised urban and rural workers. The demands of a labour aristocracy tend to be economistic rather than broad-based and revolutionary. However, links do exist between the two sectors in terms of work, and the organised workers have taken up the cause of the unorganised on several occasions, albeit not with the same persistence as they have taken up their own. Holmstrom[65] was concerned to discover how separate these two groups were in terms of (a) economic conditions and life chances, which depend on large-scale economic forces and the job market, (b) social maps - the differences and alignments that people think are important; and (c) the social worlds they lived in. He found:

> There are instances of solidarity and mutual aid; of dependence, where factory workers profit in one way or another from acting as patrons or brokers to their less fortunate neighbours; of movement across the line by able or lucky individuals, who may or may not help their relatives to follow; separation into different groups with their own kinship and job-finding networks, living apart and not aware of any common interests; and sometimes, tension and open hostility.[66]

Holmstrom was, thus, unwilling to make any sweeping generalisations about a monolithic labour "aristocracy".

However, another commentator[67] perceives the ominous signs of an "aristocracy" in demands by the major trade union federations to establish the right of the son of an employee to automatically succeed the father, on the latter's retirement. Unlike demands for wage raises, which target the employer's profit margins, this demand hits directly at the right of those not already in permanent employment to even attempt to gain such employment.

Communal Consciousness: Chakrabarty states: "An enduring feature of working-class and peasant movements in India (and elsewhere) is the ever-present possibility of fragmentation along lines of religion, language, ethnicity and the like. This is widely acknowledged in the literature and the existence of the possibility as such is seldom a subject of scholarly debate."[68] Writing about the jute workers in Bengal over the period 1890-1940, he analyses the incidents of communal violence amongst the workers, and argues that the community of religion or language was central to the jute-mill workers' sense of identity:

> The jute-mill worker had never been 'politically' emancipated from religion. Religion, therefore - or we could say, ethnicity or language or other similar loyalties - formed the stuff of his politics. This was so even at moments of confrontation between labour and capital. Mobilisation for class battles (e g. strikes) was often based on emotional

appeals to the ethnic or religious ties of the workers and to their communal sense of honour and shame.

The implication of this original attempt at "rethinking working class history" is that the Marxist assumption of an egalitarian working class consciousness was predicated upon values created by the bourgeois revolutions in Europe. In the absence of any such revolution in India, it would be misleading to assume that either industrialisation, or the top-down political organisation of the kind undertaken by the communist parties and trade unionists, would inevitably lead to the growth of a militant working class consciousness, free of the claims of the pre-bourgeois community.

Looking at the role of caste among workers in the big cities, Holmstrom[69] finds only a loose fit between caste ranking and present occupational differences. Job-finding networks are sometimes confined to castes, sometimes not, when they are, for historical reasons the best jobs may not go to the highest castes. The line between Harijans and others is the most resistant, but this too is beginning to change where Harijans live openly amongst high caste neighbours. There is more concern about differences between workers and employers and supervisors, or between language groups. While workers still think of themselves as being of certain castes, this is important socially, in terms of marriage, say, but does not guarantee help with jobs or votes in a union. For Holmstrom, "Communalism - including caste in this new form, as loyalty to a group in open competition with others - provides many people with a handy weapon with which to fight particular threats.. ; but it does not generally provide a clear consistent theory that can be used to explain all the main differences in wealth and opportunity in society."[70] He concludes, then, that caste and other ethnic labels form a "language that can be put to different uses", rather than a constant distinction across which workers can form no links.

Ascriptively defined links may incline workers to support a particular party over another, and, given the political affiliations of most trade unions, may incline them to back the union affiliated to their party, regardless of their position on industrial relationships within the plant or industry. Finally, the socio-ecological profile is subject to constant change Parties or movements based on communal sentiments may cause certain affinities, such as language or religion, to come to the fore at any particular time Or, there may be inter-generational changes, with consequences for the nature of working class organisation For instance, the rise

of a new generation of educated and skilled workers in the new industries has meant that workers are no longer willing to be led by outsiders This assertion from below has given rise to greater worker-activist led plant-level unionism as well as to a call for more democratic forms of organisation to replace the earlier hierarchical forms.[71]

The nature of organisation and leadership can have an effect on the demands raised, whether they are to do simply with wages which the older leaders tended to concentrate on, or with workplace changes, which are the concern of the worker activists. Unions led by worker activists are likely to be more militant, and less likely to work through secret deals and negotiations with the management Newer leaders are likely to place worker welfare goals above ideological or political ones. Finally, the strength of the organisation in terms of broad-based support among the workers, or links with other sections of workers, will make it less inclined to look for political support.

2: IMPACT OF INDEPENDENT VARIABLES ON DEPENDENT VARIABLES

This section will examine how the independent variables described above have influenced the nature of dependent variables such as, the nature of workers' organisation, the nature of disputes and the manner of their settlement, and wages and other benefits.

A: NATURE OF WORKERS' ORGANISATION

Timing and Nature of the Emergence of Labour Organisations: What follows are two instances where the interrelationship among a wide variety of factors has been used to explain the timing and nature of the emergence of labour organisations. Jha argues that the creation of the Madras Labour Union in 1918 was the outcome of all the socio-economic forces working in Indian society in general and in Madras in particular at that time. He quotes R.P.Dutt, however, as arguing that "the appearance of this initiative in a relatively weak industrial centre (during the whole period 1921-23 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."[72] Punekar is quoted as rebutting this by saying that this "was no mere accident but an inevitable reaction to the post-war grave economic and social conditions of the Madras factory

workers."[73] And that larger economic forces were at work is suggested by the signs of a similar situation in Ahmedabad, which gave rise soon to the Textile Labour Association there.

Comparing the emergence of the labour movements in West Bengal, Karnataka, and Rajasthan, Chatterji[74] attempts to explain (a) why organisational activities among the workers began in a significant way at about the same time (in the late 1920s and early 1930s) in all three states, despite the fact that the first modern industries had been set up in Bengal by the mid-nineteenth century, much earlier than in the other two states; and (b) the differential growth in the degree of organisation, with Bengal far ahead of the other two. The structural differentiation of industry was important, not so much in terms merely of proportion of workers in modern industry to the total population, for this was higher in Rajasthan than in Bengal, but in terms of the geographical concentration of workers, which was greater in Bengal than in the other two states. The concentration of cities, too, was important, this being greater in Bengal than in the other two, although in terms of percentage of urban residents, Mysore's was higher. Other factors, such as literacy and the circulation of newspapers was also highest in Bengal. Bengal was more industrialised than the other two, and had more exposure to a bureaucracy recruited through universalistic means, such as open competitive examinations. However, all these factors had not sufficed to create a lasting organisational base in Bengal.

Chatterji draws on the pluralist concept of diffusion, according to which the formation of associations occurs in waves, so that the formation of organisations in one area would diffuse associational activity throughout and in turn create a web of associations. The rise of associational activity in the field of labour in Bengal in 1905 was very much an extension of developments in associational activity in the political field in general at that time, its decline in 1908 coincided with the general decline of mass associations that set in about this time. Then, in the 1920s, with the entry of Gandhi into the political field, new associational activities began which were also seen in the large number of labour organisations formed during this period.

While structural differentiation provides the prerequisite for the rise of organisations, and diffusion helps to explain their spread, these are both mechanistic factors. Chatterji then introduces a voluntaristic variable — the emergence of what he calls "entrepreneurial leadership", i.e., those individuals who were willing to make personal investments in, and take risks in organising, what was hitherto an unexplored area. The 1930s saw the emergence of

a new class of leaders, somewhat less well-educated than the leaders of the 1905 period in Bengal, belonging to the middle-class, and with a predominantly left-wing outlook, all of them young in 1917 and deeply influenced by the Russian revolution They were ready to make personal investments in organising the workers, but so had the leaders of 1905. What then accounted for the ability of this new set of leaders to create more permanent organisations than had come out of 1905? Chatterji ascribes this to the conditions created by public policy at the time, such as the Reforms Act of 1919, which provided for nominated labour representation in the central and state legislatures, the 1935 Government of India Act which allowed for these representatives to be elected from special labour constituencies, and other labour specific Acts like the Trade Unions Act of 1926 The other factor which Chatterji cites to explain why the organisations of this period could be sustained, is the financial and advisory support that the international communist movement provided for labour organisation in this period.

The Role of the Industrial Relations Framework: The highly complex and legalistic industrial relations framework has made expert "outside" leaders necessary, and encouraged rivalry and competition within the union movement, thus keeping it fragmented.[75] These two outcomes, among others I shall describe shortly, have necessitated a close link between trade unions and political parties, although arguments for a reverse causal direction have also been made.

The Outcome of Party-Union Links: The consequences of the relationship between political parties and trade unions for the organisational unity and strength of the labour movement is the subject of some disagreement. Pattabhi Raman[76] has argued that while there are advantages to unions from being led by educated and skilled political negotiators, such as the passing of the Trade Union Act of 1926, for which N.M. Joshi was partly responsible, political leaders tend to subordinate the interests of workers to larger political goals. For instance, he argues, neither in the nationalist nor in the communist movements were workers consulted as to their vision of change. Thus, the nature of the link between the party leader and union masses has been essentially undemocratic.

In terms of organisation, political rivalry between unions has led to competition and wasteful use of scarce leadership and other resources. Within the sphere of industrial relations, politicisation has led to a higher incidence of strikes and conflict because it requires each union to constantly demonstrate its militancy and readiness to take action on behalf of workers. In

terms of the relationship between unions and the state, Raman argues that political rivalry has exposed workers to state repression for suspected political involvement, this being the case when the nationalists were organising against the British, and when the communists organised against the Congress government A telling reflection of the political divisions in the trade union movement was their inability to come together to oppose the bonus cuts during the Emergency.[77] In public sector unions, for instance, Raman argues that political parties tend to use the unions to paralyse the programs and actions of each other, and the government tends to suspect rival political hands behind labour disputes involving its employees For Raman, then:

> The Indian labour movement is a political labour movement not merely because its professed goals emphasise the transformation of the existing social order into a new preconceived social order, not even because it has placed reliance on political rather than economic methods of action, but rather because it has been created, weaned and nourished, helped and exploited by external political forces for the purpose chiefly of achieving ulterior political goals.[78]

According to him, the legal industrial relations framework could well have created a free and strong union movement had no politicisation preceded it

Crouch, on the other hand, argues that concerns over economic development and the long-term political concerns of leaders led them to believe that:

> ...union leaders should interest themselves in politics because most of the long run issues affecting the working class are also political issues In India trade union leaders do not simply make wage claims and threaten to strike; they feel some obligation to justify their actions in terms of economic development and progress towards socialism ...They realise that their work as trade unionists is affected by political factors. ..It is often argued that trade union leaders exploit the workers for political purposes. This is, of course, the case. I have argued that one can hardly expect them not to. If a leader believes that the worker's welfare is dependent on political decisions, which, I have argued, it is, then why should the leader be expected not to use what support he has to influence political decisions? The more important question is not, to what extent trade union leaders 'exploit' the workers for political ends, but the extent to which leaders emphasise the immediate demands of workers compared to what they believe to be the long term interests of the society, including the working class.[79]

M.V.D. Bogaert[80] puts the blame for the divided nature of the movement elsewhere

He argues that the non-recognition of unions by employers, the absence of scope for collective bargaining, and other such features of the legal framework of industrial relations, are compelling reasons for workers to seek political involvement and accept party dominance.

Chatterji[81] sees the involvement of political leaders in union work as having enabled the unions to meet certain requirements, such as legal expertise and the ability to raise labour grievances in courts and legislatures, at a very low cost.

Ramaswamy, based on a study of the Coimbatore Textile Workers' Union (TWU), found evidence against Raman's argument that political goals have been foisted upon workers without their consent. He rejects the claim that workers have no interest in party ideology but have only work related interests, and allow themselves to be used by the leaders. He argues that, in fact, the rank and file are deeply involved in politics, and that:

> the relationship between union and party is a symbiotic one. The party depends on the union for support. The union in turn depends on the party, not merely to espouse its cause in the legislature, but also to provide it a sense of identity and exclusiveness. Although the unions have been started and politicised by partisan leaders, no matter with what motives, they have developed a logic and momentum of their own. It is not only the workers for whom this logic is of prime importance. Even the partisan leaders come under its influence. Having found their way into unionism through party politics, the outsiders themselves begin to accord primacy to union interests.[82]

It is important in this context to distinguish between unions being involved on various political platforms, and the union movement being divided organisationally and prevented by this from achieving benefits for workers as workers.

The Impact of the Type of Industry. Banaji and Hensman found different patterns of unionism within different types of firms in Bombay. The external union was the leading type of unionism in Indian-controlled companies, where almost 75% of unions involved in conflict have been of this form, on the other hand, the foreign sector was more equally divided between employees' unions and external unions, with a tendency for the former to be the more common type. The joint venture firms tended to resemble the foreign firms in this respect.[83]

As far as management strategies of maintaining a pool of casual workers is concerned, it might seem that permanent and contract or casual workers have little in common, and that the latter even appear as competitors for the former. However, Holmstrom found that, in fact, there are links of solidarity between the two sectors. Friendship or kinship ties are one reason

why permanent workers show this concern for temporary or contract workers Another reason union officials cite is that a pool of low-paid labour weakens the union's bargaining position and threatens the permanent workers' jobs and wages When a permanent workers' union presents a charter of demands to the management, this very often includes demands for an improvement in the working conditions of temporary workers, although this item is often the first to be dropped when serious negotiations begin.[84]

The situation of unorganised workers in smaller units is worse, for organised workers are more likely to help the temporary workers they see everyday in their own factory Workers in the smaller firms are in no position to form unions of their own, and need help from the established union federations of organised workers, which they have only recently begun to get. In the early 1970s, rival union federations began to move into the smaller organised sector factories to preempt others from getting there. But the smaller the unit, the harder it was to get concessions from employers who were working on very small margins and who did their best to keep the unions out or break them. Some union leaders said openly that they could not afford the time or money, given the low union subscriptions and the time consuming nature of the work, to cope with the smaller units' problems More political unions thought such workers had little to contribute to the class struggle a strike by 4000 workers in a large firm brought immediate results, a strike by the same number of workers scattered into smaller units would be much harder to organise and far less effective The result, according to an anonymous writer quoted by Holmstrom is "a vicious circle: the only unions that can afford to unionise these workers are those which have many large units, and the unions with large units feel no need to organise these workers "[85]

However, newer and smaller entrants into the field, such as the Bombay Labour Union set up by George Fernandes, have no option but to turn to these workers Recent organisations and movements have attempted to unify the demands of both organised and unorganised workers, such as the Bombay minimum wage movement of 1973-74 which attempted to develop joint action among the unorganised sector workers, or the Bihar Colliery Kamgar (Workers) Union (BCKU) set up to fight the union-contractor-moneylender mafia which preys on casual and contract labour in the Dhanbad coal mines The latter is drawn from permanent and casual workers, tribals and untouchables, and attempts to link their demands and concerns.[86]

Management strategies aimed at increasing productivity by raising workloads and redeploying workers at their own discretion have important consequences for labour organisation and leadership The earlier leadership, as we have seen, tended to be drawn from the ranks of middle class professional politicians or social workers Their main concern was with ensuring job security, rather than with protesting increased productivity norms or changes in the labour process which were always considered the prerogative of management A close nexus had emerged over the years between the top layers of the trade union movement and employers in general, whereby deals were made and agreements arrived at, based on the assumption that the workers' main concern was with wages and security. Employers expected the trade union organisation to be structured hierarchically and bureaucratically in the manner of the business organisations, and to have leaders who could speak with authority on behalf of the workers and ensure that the workers carried out commitments that the leader had made. However, with increasing pressures at the workplace, the politics of trade unionism has undergone a definite change. The workers are looking for leaders who can understand and articulate their work-related concerns, and there is growing assertion from below. Worker-activists are becoming deeply interested in politics but are willing to pick and choose which ideology appeals to them, and therefore which party to turn to The result is still multiple unionism, but one that expresses the differences among the workers, rather than the efforts of parties to gain control. However, Ramaswamy concludes that "the necessity to fight battles outside the enterprise and the significance of political pulls and pressures to the outcome of these battles will place a limit on the growth of activism. The need for outside leadership would continue to be felt so long as formal procedures are so complex and long-winded and political manipulation available as a ready alternative."[87] And, as long as the concern of unions remains job security and higher wages for unionised workers, they have no way of resisting the management's strategy of not hiring new workers on a permanent basis, or shifting various lines to the unorganised sector on a contract basis. While organised labour may be able to protect its interests, it has no control over the larger picture, which is one of a shift of workers from the organised to the unorganised sector.

B: NATURE OF DISPUTES AND MANNER OF SETTLEMENT

The official listing of incidents under this category includes both strikes and lock-outs,

so that a mere examination of the frequency and duration of such disputes is not adequate to suggest the level of worker militancy. In a very useful essay on "The Meaning of the Strike", E.A. Ramaswamy[88] shows how strikes can have a number of causes and cannot be automatically assumed to reflect worker dissatisfaction or wage demands. He cautions that strikes have to be understood in their context instead of the context being deduced from strike incidence. He creates a typology of strikes, based on the dominant reason for any particular strike, while not claiming that there can be a monocausal explanation to the strike. Strikes have been classified as.

The Dispute Over Rules: Workers like to work to mutually agreed upon, informally arrived at rules, rather than to rules imposed unilaterally by the management. Management, on the other hand, views control of the workplace as its prerogative, and wishes to impose rules. This often leads to conflict. The other major conflict under this category is the strike over dismissals or suspension. This, in fact, is one of the most common reasons for strikes, for the strength of a union is judged by its ability to ensure job security.

The Wildcat Strike: By law, a strike can only be called after a 14 day notice. This period is expected to be used by the government conciliation machinery to hammer out a settlement. In practice, flash strikes without intimation to the management or the union are very common. These indicate differences between rank and file and leadership, as much as a grievance against management.

The Rite-of-Passage Strike: This is a way of forcing the management to recognise the union. The legitimacy-gaining function of the strike may not only characterise the early years of organisational effort, but may continue to be used by workers to assert the union's legitimacy long after it was first set up, especially given the intense competition that exists between several powerful unions.

Inter-Union Disputes. Given the extent of rivalry between unions, and the possibility that workers might shift support to another union, unions have to constantly assert their militancy to prove that they have not been bought off by management. This has caused unions to strike over relatively minor issues, for any attempt to negotiate over it with management may give rise to charges of complicity with management.

The Tedium-Relieving Strike: Outmoded machinery and hard working conditions caused by heavy workloads often lead better-off workers to down tools just to get a break.

These strikes are generally short — one day long typically — and the workers do not expect any settlement. Even for these strikes, though, some pretext is required, and Ramaswamy gives the example of workers from two Coimbatore mills who walked out when John F. Kennedy was assassinated!

The Political Strike: A strike may be launched by an opposition-supported union to discredit the government. Or, the party in power may try to increase support for its union by urging it to strike against agreements arrived at by other unions, in order to show greater militancy.

The Bread-and-Butter Strike: This is the most commonly assumed reason for a strike, yet Ramaswamy argues that wage claims have seldom been pressed by labour by means of a strike. Wages and workloads were determined either by wage boards or decided at the industry level by means of negotiations, frequently with the help of government negotiators. The question of bonus, which workers consider a right, has led to far more disputes.

The duration of a strike will depend on the management's willingness to negotiate as well as on the workers' capacity to hold out. Banaji and Hensman describe what they term "an industrial relations geography": While the greater Bombay area was characterised by shorter and fewer lock-outs, the industrial relations culture of rural industrialisation, by contrast, was one of employer aggressiveness, reflected in the greater frequency and longer duration of lockouts. Ownership also affected the duration of strikes; strike seemed to last longer in the rural areas than in the cities in foreign-controlled firms, but were shorter in the rural areas compared to the cities in Indian firms. Banaji and Hensman explain this in the following way:

> durations are ... determined by two sorts of factors or types of influence - in Bombay and Thane-Belapur the primary influence is the management's willingness to settle (its 'propensity to negotiate'). Because the foreign company managements are more willing to settle, here strikes are generally called off sooner, in the other types of location (semi-rural and dispersed rural), the primary influence is the workers' capacity to sustain long strikes, and this implies that the workforces in the foreign plants in these areas are relatively less easily beaten into submission than the employees of Indian companies ...[89]

This is so mainly because the Indian companies are willing to use harsher strike-breaking tactics.

The manner of dispute settlement and duration of a strike will also depend on the

predilections of the state executive, and its willingness to use persuasion, or to send in the police.

C: WAGES AND OTHER BENEFITS

Chatterji believes that wage increases have been the primary goal of the union movement. However, he shows that they have in fact had little influence over wages. He quotes Johri as having demonstrated empirically "that the degree of unionisation has no direct effect upon earnings." In another study Chatterji reports, M M Dadi found that labour's share of income in India declined over the period 1953-65 The 1969 Report of the National Commission on Labour confirmed these findings when it said that wage costs as a proportion of total costs of manufacture have registered a decline, and that the same is true of workers' share in value added by manufacture Chatterji concludes that, while workers have not been able to increase labour's share of the national income, they have succeeded in linking wages to the consumer price index, although this did not prevent a slight decline in real wages from 100 in 1951 to 98 in 1970 [90]

This lack of success can be explained by a number of factors. Firstly, as economists have argued, wages may be a function of demand and supply rather than of unionisation Secondly, wages for the larger industries were traditionally set by wage boards until relatively recently. Thirdly, as detailed in Section 1 B., wages are to a large extent related to features of the industry, such as whether it is experiencing an expansion in output, has a monopoly in the market, and is a high-technology TNC or a small-scale auxiliary Finally, features of the industrial relations system created by the legislative framework, management intransigence, and politicisation of unions may be seen as having an important role to play Public policy that encourages the multiplicity of unions and discourages collective bargaining, as well as the management's intransigence with regard to recognising unions as representative bargaining agents, have undermined the organisational strength of workers and their ability to influence wage decisions

While the party in power may not be able to impose a particular wage on industrialists, it may have some influence in the area of enforcement of a minimum wage. Similarly, wage increases may be dependent on political decisions, such as the decision to freeze wages during the Emergency.

D: POWER TO INFLUENCE POLICY AND RAISE POLITICAL DEMANDS

Chatterji argues that the goals of social restructuring remain an important component of the organisational objectives of most large unions, chiefly because they have so little influence over the share of income, and need other long-term organisational objectives. The ability of workers to have an input into labour policy is an important index of their strength, but is mainly dependent on their relationship with the party in power, or the ideological predilections of the party in power that causes it to seek such input. It must be noted here that, even if workers do manage to have a say on some aspects of labour policy, they have virtually no representation on bodies that make other economic and social policies that also impact upon them.

3: REVIEW OF MULTIVARIATE LITERATURE

Sensitive commentators on the Indian labour and industrial relations scene have pointed to the links among variables I will briefly discuss some of these works, although most of them have already been mentioned in the course of the chapter.

Harold Crouch in Trade Unions and Politics in India examines various aspects of the industrial relations background, such as the relation between unions and the working class, unions and the state, the history of unionisation, and the origins of politics in the trade union movement, in order to determine the causes, extent and nature of politicisation of Indian unions, and to evaluate its consequences

Myers and Kannappan in Industrial Relations in India provide a similar multi-variate account to deal with questions of labour commitment and other such "problems" in the industrialisation of India. Though many of their assumptions, such as that of "labour commitment" as a problem, have been convincingly challenged by later writers such as Ramaswamy and Holmstrom, the work (first published in 1958) remains an important source on the requirements of, and decisions taken in, the early post-independence period.

Two recent and very interesting studies which both attempt to explain micro actions or patterns of industrial relations through an examination of larger economic or geographic forces, are Bhattacharjee's "Unions, State and Capital in Western India: Structural Determinants of the 1982 Bombay Textile Strike" and Banaji and Hensman's "Outline of an

IR Theory of Industrial Conflict". Bhattacharjee argues that the "strike represented a prolonged moment where labour, capital, and state had to confront and overcome 'barriers' created by an objective crisis of accumulation in the industry as well as by a subjective crisis of legitimacy in the labour movement"[91], and goes on to describe these barriers and crises. Banaji and Hensman's concern is different, having to do not so much with macro-economic forces as with plant-level differences in managerial style, which create different conditions for labour to operate in. However, they, too, sketch a historical geography of plant types, and the impact of this on the nature of industrial conflict. In addition, they provide insights into the causal complexity of disputes, with geographical location and organisational history as setting the parameters within which they are conducted.

A work similar in approach to the above two is E.A. Ramaswamy's Worker Consciousness and Trade Union Response which is "an attempt to paint a macro picture through essentially micro methods."[92] Focusing on the major industrial metropoles of Bombay, Madras, Calcutta and Bangalore, he investigates in detail specific situations where dramatic changes in leadership have taken place in recent times, and places these phenomena in the context of larger forces operating in each city, which have sparked off managerial responses in the form of lower-cost hiring practices and labour-saving automation. Ramaswamy also describes the consequent growth of a parallel body of unorganised workers, both casual and temporary workers in the organised sector, and workers in the auxiliary and contract units in the unorganised sector, especially in the newer industries.

It is precisely the relationship between workers in these two sectors — the organised and the unorganised — that Holmstrom is concerned to explore. He studies these relationships on several levels: the people's experience and thinking; their social origins; their relations with kin and other workers, inside and outside the organised sector; economic and technical links between large and small firms; the consequences of changing technologies; and the economic and political setting. The questions he seeks to answer are: (a) Is it true that organised sector workers are better off than those in the informal sector, and, if they are, is it sensible to think of them as a privileged elite in a dual economy? (b) If organised sector workers are generally better off, is that inevitable at this stage of industrialisation? Is the difference between the two sectors simply the outcome of uneven development, or is one sector better off because the other is less well off? And, finally, (c) Do organised and unorganised sector workers think and act

as if they were in a dual economy, i e , do they live in separate social worlds? His conclusions have already been discussed in Section I.C of this chapter

Finally, I will turn to the two works closest to mine in intent, R.Chatterji's Unions Politics and the State, and E A.Ramaswamy's Power and Justice. Chatterji's work aims at uncovering the reasons why unions are driven to form links with political parties, and draws on union-state, union-party, and intra-union organisational variables to explain this. His interest for me lies in the fact that he has chosen to test his hypotheses at the level of the states, arguing that "the literature on interest groups in India indicates that such groups have been able to influence politics more at the state level than at the national. Thus, in studying them at the state level, one may be able to understand better both their successes and failures."[93] This would also facilitate understanding of the relationship between the state branch and the national organisation of the central union federations. Chatterji, however, studies only unions linked to the national federations, and only two per state, one in an engineering industry and the other in a non-engineering one. He examines the political trajectories and social cultures of the states of Karnataka, Rajasthan and West Bengal, the role of public policy, leadership and political affiliation, and endeavours to uncover the relative importance of each in the timing and strength of union activity in each of the states.

Ramaswamy's concern is akin to mine, in that he argues that "Indian industrial relations are such as to put theories of the state to the acid test."[94] Looking at two specific industrial disputes in Tamil Nadu, he examines what precisely the state does in its capacity as mediator and arbitrator, in order to answer the question of where the state stands in relation to capital and labour, and to isolate the issues and conditions in which it favours one over the other. He comes to the conclusion that state intervention favours capital on most issues such as wages and productivity rules, but that it favours workers in the case of dismissal and loss of job security. Ultimately, however, it is not the working class that gains, but one section of it, the section aligned with the ruling party. The state acts as it does because it is not an impersonal structure, but rather is represented by the political executive, which acts in all cases primarily out of partisan self-interest

Although both Chatterji and Ramaswamy are sensitive to the impact of the political party in power, most of Chatterji's analysis is based on the period up until the 1970s, when Congress governments were still in power in the states he compares, so that it is not a variable

in his comparisons. In Ramaswamy's work, on the other hand, the nature and activities of the DMK in power is treated in detail, and the consequences of partisan intervention are recognised, but both cases he compares are from Tamil Nadu, so that a valid comparison remains to be made with the actions of other parties in power. While recognising, then, my intellectual debt to these two authors, and to those listed above, it is this precise lacuna that my thesis attempts to fill.

NOTES

1. S.D.Punekar, "Aspects of State Intervention in Industrial Relations in India: An Evaluation," in Arthur M. Ross ed., Industrial Relations and Economic Development (London: Macmillan, 1966), 22.

2. N.N. Chatterjee, Industrial Relations in India's Developing Economy (Calcutta: Allied Book Agency, 1984), 88-106, also details the history and politics of certain labour laws.

3. Ibid., 271-273.

4. Punekar, "Aspects of State Intervention", 23.

5. The immediate cause for this was the Bombay textile strike of 1928 which accounted for a loss of some 23 million person-days out of a total of 31.65 million during the entire year, and which sparked off unrest in practically every industry.

6. Chatterjee, Industrial Relations, 275.

7. Ibid., 290-309.

8. Punekar, "Aspects of State Intervention", 23-27.

9. Ibid., 27.

10. Ibid., 28-29.

11. Ibid., 29.

12. See also Chatterjee, Industrial Relations, 86.

13. Ibid., 84. V.V.Giri -- a respected moderate trade unionist who became Labour Minister in 1951 and was strongly opposed to compulsory adjudication, which he argued kept labour organisations weak -- resigned in 1954 when he failed to have collective bargaining made statutory.

14 Ibid., 88.

15 Punekar, "Aspects of State Intervention", 30-31.

16 Ibid., 31.

17. See Chatterjee, Industrial Relations, 492-506, for more details.

18 Rakhahari Chatterji, Unions, Politics and the State: A Study of Indian Labour Politics, (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1980), 188-189.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid., 190-191

21. Ibid , 232-235.

22. Ibid., 241-243.

23. Chatterjee, Industrial Relations, 758-759.

24. Shivji describes the argument of the ideology thus: "We are backward and we need to develop and develop very fast. In this task of development we cannot afford the luxury of politics." Issa G. Shivji, "Introduction: The Transformation of the State and the Working People," in I.G. Shivji ed., The State and the Working People in Tanzania (Dakar: CODESRIA, 1986), 1-2.

25. Colin Gonsalves, "Tragedy of Contract Workers", EPW, 27 February, 1988.

26. Radha Iyer, "Labour Judiciary in Crisis", EPW, 10 March, 1990.

27. Ibid., 368-372. See also Sarath Chandra Davala, "Question of Union Recognition", EPW, 25 November, 1989.

28. Harold Crouch, Trade Unions and Politics in India (Bombay: Manaktalas, 1966), 57.

29. N. Pattabhi Raman, Political Involvement of India's Tra e Unions (New Delhi: Asia Publishing House, 1967), 40.

30. Harold Crouch, Trade Unions, 84.

31. The INTUC figures included the dubiously precise figure of 270,000 handloom and agricultural workers.

32 Ibid., 93.

33. Chatterji, Unions, Politics, 138-170.

34. G.L Nanda, quoted in Ibid , 144.

35. Ibid., 138-170.

36. Lenin, "What is to be Done" cited in Ibid., 143

37. Vallabhbhai Patel, quoted in Ibid., 144

38. Harold Crouch, Trade Unions, 96-153.

39. Chatterji, Unions, Politics, 145.

40. Ibid., 147-158.

41. Ibid., 158-161

42. Ibid., 161-170.

43. Ibid., 166-167.

44. This entire section draws on Harold Crouch, Trade Unions, 13 ff, unless otherwise acknowledged.

45. Charles Myers and Subbiah Kannappan, Industrial Relations in India (London: Asia Publishing House, 1970), 36.

46. Ibid., 39.

47. Mark Holmstrom, Industry and Inequality: The Social Anthropology of Indian Labour (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 43.

48. Ibid., 10, 116. Mridul Eapen, "Structure of Manufacturing Workforce: A Preliminary Analysis of Emerging Tendencies," EPW, August 1984, suggests that the pattern of industrial development in India seems to be, on the one hand, the establishment of capital-intensive, large-scale units, and on the other, the proliferation of smaller, more dispersed units to cater to the former. He provides an interesting table (1447) showing the extent of sub-contracting by selected private sector units.

49. Ibid , 149.

50. Swapan Kumar Sen, "Inter-Industry Differences in Growth of Real Earnings: Some Implications for Wage Policy," EPW, 30 March, 1985.

51. DN, "Employee's Son", EPW, 23 January, 1988.

52. Debashish Bhattacharjee, "Unions, State and Capital in Western India: Structural Determinants of the Bombay Textile Strike," in Roger Southall ed., Labour and Unions in Asia and Africa (London: Macmillan Press, 1987), 215.

53. Ibid., 221.

54. Chatterji, Unions, Politics; Harold Crouch, Trade Unions; Myers and Kannappan, Industrial Relations.

55. Jairus Banaji and Rohini Hensman, "Outline of an IR Theory of Industrial Conflict," EPW, 25 August, 1990

56. Ibid., M-146

57. Radha Iyer, "Understanding Labour-Management Relations: Case of Siemens," EPW, 31 August 1992.

58 E.A. Ramaswamy, Worker Consciousness and Trade Union Response (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988).

59 Chamanlal Revri, The Indian Trade Union Movement: An Outline History 1880-1947 (New Delhi Orient Longman, 1972), 31.

60. Jaganath Pathy, "The Structure of the Indian Working Class and Conventional Unionism", in Roger Southall ed., Labour and Unions. On the murder of Niyogi, see George Fernandes, "A Cause Beyond Compromise", Illustrated Weekly of India, 9-15 November, 1991, and Anil Nauriya, "What Chattisgarh Movement Means", EPW, 30 November, 1991.

61. Charles A. Myers, Labour Problems in the Industrialisation of India (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958).

62. M.D. Morris, The Emergence of an Industrial Labor Force in India: A Study of the Bombay Cotton Mills 1854-1947 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), 202.

63 Banaji and Hensman, "Outline of an IR Theory".

64. Bhattacharjee, "Unions, State".

65. Holmstrom, Industry and Inequality; South Indian Factory Workers.

66. Idem, Industry and Inequality, 281.

67. DN, "Employee's Son".

68. Dipesh Chakraborty, Rethinking Working Class History: Bengal 1890-1940 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 220.

69 Holmstrom, Industry and Inequality, 282-284.

70. Ibid., 286-287.

71. E.A Ramaswamy, Worker Consciousness.

72. Shiva Chandra Jha, The Indian Trade Union Movement: An Account and Interpretation (Calcutta: Firma K.L Mukhopadhyay, 1970), 95.

73. Ibid.

74. Chatterji, Unions, Politics.

75. Chatterjee, Industrial Relations, 269

76. Pattabhi Raman, Political Involvement, 163-165

77. Chatterji, Unions, Politics, 230-231.

78. Pattabhi Raman, Political Involvement, 165.

79. Harold Crouch, Trade Unions, 280-281.

80. Michael V.D. Bogaert, Trade Unionism in India's Ports: A Case Study in Calcutta and Bombay (New Delhi: Shri Ram Centre for Industrial Relations, 1970).

81. Chatterji, Unions, Politics.

82. E.A.Ramaswamy, "Politics and Organised Labour in India", in Robin Cohen et al ed., Peasants and Proletarians: The Struggles of Third World Workers (London: Monthly Review Press, 1979), 300-301.

83. Banaji and Hensman, "Outline of IR Theory", M-149.

84. Holmstrom, Industry and Inequality, 300.

85. Ibid., 301.

86. Ibid., 303.

87. E.A.Ramaswamy, Worker Consciousness, 234.

88. E.A. Ramaswamy, "The Meaning of a Strike," in E.A. Ramaswamy ed., Industrial Relations in India: A Sociological Perspective (Delhi: Macmillan, 1978).

89. Banaji and Hensman, "Outline of an IR Theory", M-148.

90. Chatterji, Unions, Politics, 95-102.

91. Bhattacharjee, "Unions, State", 212.

92. E.A.Ramaswamy, Worker Consciousness, 15.

93. Chatterji, Unions, Politics, 14.

94. E.A. Ramaswamy, Power and Justice: The State in Industrial Relations (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984), 5.

CHAPTER III: INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

This chapter will elaborate on the independent variables in this study: the nature of the party regime in power (Section 1), the nature of industry (Section 2), and the nature and strength of workers' organisations prior to the period under study (Section 3)

1: PARTY REGIMES

The nature of the party regime can be seen in the responses to questions such as: Who rules? Who benefits? Who opposes? How is social domination organised — who controls property and who commands status and respect? How do the socially weak and powerful interact with the regime? What is the impact of regime intervention on established patterns of social domination?[1] In order to answer these questions I will look at the party in each state in terms of its social base, ideology, leadership and organisation, policies, relations with the central government, and relations with other parties in the state.

As one will see, quite different political configurations came into being during the mid- to late-1960s in each of the three states under study. The situations preceding this change were in large part similar, although the structural features that shaped the outcomes were not. The Congress party came to power in most states after Independence, because it was seen as the party which had won independence As the bearer of the nationalist movement, the party represented a broad coalition of interests, albeit largely from elite or already mobilised groups. It had several political stalwarts in its national and state leadership, included most village and municipal level notables in its membership, and was entrenched in local bodies [2]

However, by the mid-1960s, this coalition of interests began to pull apart for a variety of reasons Nehru had died in 1964 There was a war with Pakistan in 1965, and a food crisis in 1965-67 The mobilisation of new constituencies from hitherto unmobilised sections, many of whom were educated and unemployed and resented the elite orientation of the Congress, compounded its unpopularity. The strongly centralising tendencies of the Congress at the Centre were resented at the state level, with each state government, despite being a Congress government, complaining of discrimination and neglect in central resource allocations.[3]

A: MAHARASHTRA

The Congress party has been in power in Maharashtra since Independence, except for two years from 1978 to 1980, when the state was governed by an alliance between the Janata group of parties (Socialists, Jan Sangh, and Congress dissidents) and a breakaway Congress faction. This alliance, too, had the same social base as the Congress, so that the dominant social and political elites in Maharashtra have remained unchanged since Independence [4]

Contemporary politico-economic dominance in Maharashtra is understood to lie with the Marathas as the dominant caste The Marathas, together with the Kunbis, are the numerically preponderant caste cluster in Maharashtra, accounting for some 40-45% of the population. They are agriculturalists, with the upper 15-20% being large landholders and cultivators, and the rest middle to small farmers The Kunbis are the lowest section of this caste cluster in economic terms The Brahmins, now mostly urban, are less than 5% of the population, the artisan and other intermediate castes (other backward classes) 25-30%, and the scheduled castes and tribes 20% Within Bombay city, the Brahmins and other advanced castes make up the bulk of the service and government sector white-collar workers, while the Mangs and Mahars (scheduled castes), along with some Marathas, constitute the manual labour groups. The industrial and commercial bourgeoisie in Bombay is largely non-Marathi, being mostly Gujarati and Marwari in origin.[5]

In the 1930s, the Marathas who had earlier shunned the Congress because it was Brahmin dominated, began joining it in large numbers, attracted by its growing interest in the emancipation of the peasantry The Congress leadership in Bombay in the 1930s and 1940s was still mostly urban and Brahmin. Even though Marathas formed a large part of its membership and had been responsible for its victory in the rural areas, they were given only a small representation in the Congress ministries of 1937 and 1946. This caused some Marathas to oppose it from the outside and led to the formation of the Peasants and Workers Party (PWP) in 1948, composed of non-Brahmins and leftist Brahmins The PWP did badly in the general elections of 1952, and some of the non-Brahmin leaders joined the Congress Others, like Y.B Chavan, had always stayed with it, declaring that "ours was a party in power, we could try to help them (people) in difficult matters".[6]

Social base The Maratha-Kunbis form the base of the Congress in the rural areas, and

it is here that it is strongest However, the Congress also draws support from the small-town middle class of professionals, moneylenders, traders, who are normally from the upper castes; from the scheduled castes and tribes who have benefited from reservations; and from other middle and backward castes. Lele states: "A cooperative-competitive relationship exists between these various segments of the dispersed middle class including the rural middle class . The political culture of this class, its ideology, is that of the Marathas...."[7] Since the days of Y B Chavan, many Muslim and scheduled caste elite individuals have been accommodated into the Congress system — more than in most other states. Realising that, without spatial concentration, mobilisation against Maratha hegemony or the Congress system would be ineffective, they have pragmatically developed a vested interest in the maintenance of the system.

Despite the initial trepidations of the Bombay industrialists when faced with a government dominated by the rural elite, and despite a few policies that favour agricultural interests,[8] the industrialists have been pleasantly surprised by the cooperation they have received from the Congress government, as, for instance, in acquiring land in already overcrowded Bombay. Thus, there has developed a special relationship between business and Congress, with business donating large sums to the private campaign funds of Congress politicians.[9]

Ideology. While the Maratha caste cluster is economically differentiated, it is ideologically united, although the ideology is hard to define except as a kind of patriarchy and patrimonialism. The real economic differences among the various Maratha castes are masked by an idea of community and kinship Even as Maratha hegemony has remained unchallenged, the illusion of openness has been maintained through the controlled admission of limited segments from outside the traditional ruling classes, for example, through reservations for the backward castes in legislature, local councils, schools, colleges and jobs. This accommodative-competitive character of the Maharashtrian system has been labelled "elite-pluralism".[10]

Organisation and leadership: Recognising this fact of elite-pluralism, Y.B Chavan designed in the early 1960s a hierarchy of formal structures that created linkages between the local and state government elites: local government, cooperative societies,

educational institutions, and the party organisation The party organisation referred not so much to cadres as to identified leaders who could be relied on to bring their support bases with them. With the creation of Panchayati Raj institutions and with the establishment of credit, input and marketing cooperatives, the district became the crucial unit of elite competition The smooth functioning of this system was ensured by the patrimonial allocation of scarce resources; this also brought into existence a hierarchy of informal structures of influence [11]

Public Policies: Post-independence rural development programmes, like education and agricultural development, have been carried out under pressure from the middle and large landowners, predominantly Maratha, and have largely benefitted them. A case in point is the Monopoly Cotton Procurement Scheme, whereby the government has to buy cotton at fixed prices. Since the largest one-third of the cotton growers own 73% of the cotton-growing land and grow 73% of the cotton, this scheme benefits them almost to the exclusion of the 65% of smaller growers who have often to sell the cotton to village moneylenders for immediate cash Since the main buyers of cotton are textile mills, cooperatives and handlooms, this is one of the few schemes where the interests of the rural and urban bourgeoisie are very delicately balanced.

Another policy, or the absence of it, that reflects Maratha hegemony, is the Congress government's foot-dragging over drawing up a list of backward castes in the state and researching their situation as directed by the central government. The Mandal Commission of the central government made certain recommendations in 1980 which, if implemented, would have put 75% of Maharashtra's population under positive discrimination, since it listed the Kunbis as backward. While many groups were set up across the state to study the findings and press for their implementation, there were no anti-reservation riots as in Gujarat Rather, the Maratha elites ignored them and continued quietly to exercise their political and economic power.

The Congress government has never managed to make a concerted response to issues associated with urbanisation and industrialisation, such as land acquisition for New Bombay, eviction of pavement dwellers, and protection of slum dwellers Rather, it has dealt with individual cases in isolation, thus helping maintain a state of flux which allows for new and vocal but non-hegemonic elites to be absorbed into the Congress system.[12]

Relationship with the Centre. Y.B Chavan's success in establishing a competitive Congress system in Maharashtra brought him to Nehru's cabinet. When Indira Gandhi came to power, she recognised her own lack of an established base in the states as well as the growing discontent with the system among the more conscious elements of the exploited classes, and decided at the start of the 1970s to widen and strengthen her base by mounting a populist appeal In Maharashtra, the discontent was located primarily in the urban centres among the recently educated and unemployed youth and those whom the drought had forced to migrate to the city Indira Gandhi's strategy was to build up alternative leaders to replace the elite pluralists She turned first to an existing strongman, V P.Naik, in 1971, then to S B Chavan in 1975 It was S.B Chavan who implemented her populist policies such as the 20 point programme during the Emergency. He had to do this through the existing structures controlled by Maratha elites, who played his game but continued to nurture their traditional support bases Thus the latter won their seats in 1977, when many of S.B. Chavan's nominees lost; this pattern was repeated in the Assembly elections of 1978.

In 1977, the Congress in Maharashtra split into two: the Congress, consisting of the elite pluralists like Y B Chavan, Vasant Dada Patil (Dada), Naik and Sharad Pawar, and the Congress (I) consisting of Mrs Gandhi's handpicked populists — A.R. Antulay, Bhosle, R. Adik and Tirpude. The conflict between elite pluralism and populism was thus clearly articulated Each Congress party won an almost equal number of seats, and came together in an uneasy coalition to form the government, with Dada as chief minister and Tirpude as deputy chief minister. In 1978, Sharad Pawar broke the coalition and led his faction into an alliance with the Janata group of parties. This alliance then came to power, with Pawar as chief minister. After numerous further forming and breaking of alliances, most of the breakaway groups joined the Congress (I) in 1979, and it went on to win a huge majority in the elections of 1980.

Thus throughout the 1970s, populism had not been able to unseat the Maratha elite pluralists. Of the four chief ministers in that period, three — Y.B Chavan, Dada and S B Chavan were Marathas. In 1980, however, A R.Antulay, a loyal Muslim supporter of Indira Gandhi from the ranks of the populists, was made the chief minister. His major task was to help the new MLAs build structures of support in their constituencies. New informal committees were set up to handle the allotment of loans, pensions and special awards, manned

by the populists. However, the old structures of elite competition, such as the cooperatives and zilla parishads, remained, and were still the mainstay of the rural Congress system, so that the populists were forced to create alternative channels for newcomers. The newcomers were subject to frequent attack, as Antulay was about his misuse of discretionary state powers, as was his successor Bhosle. Eventually Dada was reinstituted as chief minister. Further machinations and alliances followed but what had become clear was that the elite pluralists could not be dismissed lightly.[13]

Relationship with Other Parties. The only organisation that ever explicitly claimed to speak for the "Maratha interest" was the Maratha Mahasabha (Federation). Founded by Annasaheb Patil, it developed a powerful union of Maratha-Kunbi porters in Bombay. While the Maratha elite distanced itself from him in public, the Mahasabha served a very useful purpose for it. It has been argued that: "It saved the troops of the Maratha-Kunbi mathadis (porters), an important segment of Bombay's proletariat, from falling victim to the seduction of radical or leftist alternatives."[14]

Another party based on similar "sons of the soil" appeal is the Shiv Sena, which has performed a similar function with respect to the Marathi petit bourgeoisie in the service sector and the poorer segments of Marathi workers in the informal sector. Founded in 1966, it first attacked South Indian migrants in lower level white-collar occupations. However, it has not gained much ground outside Bombay; even there its fortunes have wavered and, after a spectacular success in the municipal elections of 1985, have since waned. Its resurgence was due to its ability to exploit rising Hindu militancy.[15]

As regards the other opposition parties, the Congress faction that broke away from Indira Gandhi in 1978 could not retain its influence in Bombay, its erstwhile stronghold, and even less in other areas. Until 1977, the Jan Sangh/RSS had a narrow base among a section of Brahmins and some urban traders. The PWP and the Lal Nishan Party have some support in the rural areas, the latter also in some areas of Bombay. The Socialists and Communists continue to exercise some influence in the trade union movement, but this influence does not get reflected in parliamentary politics. The Jan Sangh, Socialists and Congress dissidents managed to get together to fight the elections after the Emergency, but this alignment did not hold.[16]

The Congress (I), on the other hand, won 43 out of the 48 seats from Maharashtra in the parliamentary elections of 1984, continued to hold its strength during the anti-Congress swing in 1989, and retained a comfortable majority in 1991. In the Assembly elections, too, the Congress continues to dominate. While intra-elite rivalry on regional grounds has led to factional disputes and fallouts, most dissent has been contained within the party in the form of intra-elite bargaining. As Lele concludes, "the only effective political idiom in Maharashtra today is still the Congress idiom."[17]

B: TAMIL NADU

Tamil Nadu has been ruled by the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and the All-India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) since 1967, except during the period of the Emergency when it was governed directly from the Centre, as it was again in 1991. Manivannan[18] identifies three phases of politics in Tamil Nadu since Independence: the Congress era (1947-67), the rise of Dravidian politics since 1967; and the emergence of populist politics since 1972 as a consequence of the decline of the Dravidian movement. I will be looking at the entire period from 1967 to 1991, arguing that the populism of the 1970s and 1980s was but the logical response of the Dravidian ideology when confronted with the realities of office.

The DMK and AIADMK have roots in the non-Brahmin movement of the 1910s and 1920s and in the more "radical" Dravidian or anti-Aryan movement led by E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker (EVR) in the 1930s. Dravidian politics, according to Washbrook, can best be seen as a reaction to the "modernisation" of Tamil society, the deleterious material implications of which became very clear during the Depression of the 1930s.[19] EVR's audience was largely urban artisanal groups whose trades were depressed, and immigrants from the intermediate caste groups of the countryside who were squeezed out of the countryside by the Depression. His economic message was one of a restoration of the "share" economy and community systems of production. The Brahmins and Vellalas (forward castes), who had made it into the new arena of education and government employment, were the particular target of his criticism of privilege, and he began to urge that such opportunities be more evenly distributed on the basis of need, especially to the backward castes.

EVR's argument was the exact opposite of that of the Congress, which insisted that jobs

be distributed on the basis of competitive merit. The Congress in Tamil Nadu was led by the elites produced by colonial modernisation — educated professionals, wealthy mirasidars and businessmen — and its policies were designed to serve the interests of these groups.

Nonetheless, during the late 1930s the Congress began to win support among most elites, including the non-Brahmin elites, as it was seen as the vehicle for economic development and progress. Although Tamil Nadu had little experience of the freedom struggle, the Madras electorates of 1937 and 1946, which consisted of the wealthiest 10-15% of the society and were predominantly non-Brahmin, gave the Congress its largest majorities in India. While the Congress remained in power after 1947 and through the 1950s and 1960s on the basis of this elite support and its powers of patronage, it was never able to extend its base beyond these elites. Encouraged by EVR, the petit bourgeoisie of the towns regularly organised riots and agitations against those measures of the Congress of which they disapproved, such as the Hindi and backward caste legislation.

This alienation was harnessed successfully by C. Annadurai, the founder of the DMK, who broke away from EVR in 1949, finding EVR's positions insufficiently grounded in the economic realities of the day. Annadurai also pragmatically shifted the emphasis of the Dravidian movement from a racial to a cultural conception of nationalism, seeing Tamils as Indians with special cultural and historical differences. The DMK began to enjoy increasing electoral success, first in municipal elections and urban constituencies but later spreading to the countryside, picking up many of the newer voters. The rise of the DMK corresponded to the rise in electoral participation.[20] Much of the DMK's success lay in its ability to use the cinema to conjure up a glorious past distinct to the Tamils, irrespective of class. The DMK also capitalised on the growing economic discontent by promising free or subsidised food.

The DMK's steady move to a more moderate position vis-a-vis the centre and the elites saw Karunanidhi, who had inherited its leadership from Anna, presiding over the absorption of the Congress elites into the party for the 1971 election. This consolidated the DMK hegemony: the party won 184 out of 234 seats. However, this also caused problems as the party now began to be seen as nothing more than Congress elitism in disguise. EVR took to the streets again and won back the erstwhile, but now disenchanted, DMK supporters, at which point Karunanidhi responded with coercion and corruption in order to retain his support. M.G.Ramachandran (MGR) then stood forth to claim Anna's mantle and formed a breakaway

party called the Anna-DMK. His election victory in 1977 was greeted by many as a return to greater egalitarianism, although the course of events showed this to be a rather misplaced hope. MGR remained in power until his death in 1989, which provided an opportunity for the return of Karunanidhi's DMK This, however, did not last longer than two years, and the AIADMK is back in power, with the support of the Congress (I), under the leadership of Jayalalitha, MGR's mistress, and claimant to his mantle.[21]

Social Base: Class has rarely been the basis of mobilisation in twentieth century Tamil Nadu, mainly because the agricultural society is based upon small-scale production units and an extremely wide distribution of rights in land The development of capitalism in agriculture led only to an intensification and perpetuation of the self-exploitation of family labour, rather than to the classical pattern of differentiation. The absence of rent-receiving zamindars and the operation of hidden means of surplus extraction has meant that while 63% of the population of Tamil Nadu lives below the poverty line, and people are not politically passive, it is hard for them to know whom to blame.

The emergence of small property owners, rather than an alienated proletariat, was also a feature of the towns Between 1921 and 1961, the percentage of urban inhabitants of Tamil Nadu increased from 15 to 27%. While to some extent this urban growth can be attributed to the growth of new industries, such as cotton textiles, sugar, cement and light engineering, only a small part (15% in 1951) of the urban population could be said to be engaged in these industries The major employers were small workshops, artisanal units such as handloom weaving, the petty commercial and informal trading sectors, government, and educational institutions Thus, in the city, too, there has been no growth of a binary opposition between capital and labour, but rather a proliferation of a petit bourgeoisie. Since much of the "labour" possesses small property, or is employed on such a casual, and hence precarious, basis in such poor conditions, the possibilities of unionisation are slight.[22]

Caste, too, provided no better mobilisational ground. No single caste was preponderant over an area equivalent to more than one colonial district. The barriers which caste placed on occupational mobility were traditionally few and were regularly jumped, so that even at the bottom of the ladder, caste and class did not always overlap.[23] However, it must be remembered that the Brahmins, while numerically small and not always the wealthiest,

controlled social and political power in the region through membership in the bureaucracy [24]

Ideology: There are many inconsistencies and contradictions within the ideology of the Dravidian movement, and between ideology and reality, as well as between ideology and its expression in policy. The basis of the movement was its anti-Forward caste appeal, its Dravidian chauvinism and anti-Aryanism, expressed in a rejection of Hindi as the country's official language, and its espousal of a pan-Tamil, Dravidian, communitarian identity that ignored the realities of class Yet the foci of identity in the movement — whether caste, class, religion, language or nation — were constantly changing.[25]

On coming to power in 1967 the DMK softened its anti-centre rhetoric and even turned pro-centre. School books were rewritten to show the long and glorious participation of Tamils in the freedom struggle. Thus, "a sub-nationalist movement originally created for separatist ends, began to see itself as having 'liberated' the very nation from which it had wanted to separate."[26]

While the concept of equality is key to the Dravidian political ideology, it is equality understood not as the abolition of privilege but its sharing The ruling praxis is that, however social justice is to be obtained, it is not by redistributing ownership of the means of production or even through progressive taxation. Similarly, the anti-caste thrust of the movement took on a new meaning, and far from dissolving caste at the social level, the movement has tended to enhance its importance as, for instance, in the backward caste codes, which have been expanded so as to build a permanent line of conflict between the forward castes and the backward into the political system. Washbrook concludes that:

> In DMK Tamil politics, it would seem that the way to succeed is to adopt rhetorical positions which are untenable in the light of all available evidence; abandon them as soon as they have done their job and provided the means of achieving office; adopt new positions which are precisely the reverse of the old ones, and use power to reduce growth and general levels of development. If this is done blatantly and rapidly enough, it brings massive popularity and what amounts to a virtual hegemony over the state level political process and discourse [27]

Organisation: EVR and Annadurai built up a strong cadre organisation, drawn mostly from the ranks of the rural and urban petit bourgeoisie. The DMK under Karunanidhi

continued to retain this organisational structure, but the base of the AIADMK under MGR, and now Jayalalitha, is largely in the nature of a fan club. In all cases, however, the parties are held together by sycophantic allegiance to a more or less charismatic leader.[28]

Public Policies. The land reforms of the 1950s were done under the aegis of the Congress government, very little on those lines has occurred since. The temples, the largest owners of land in the countryside, remained untouched, and only in 1982 did MGR make cosmetic changes to their entitlements. In fact, there exists a highly regressive sales tax from which the state earns its revenues. Property tax rates in DMK-controlled Madras have not been changed since 1967 even though property values have quintupled since then. Thus, despite the rhetoric of attacking privilege, the wealthy in Tamil Nadu have not been required to make any contribution to the state coffers There are, however, hidden costs for the wealthy, in that very little is being invested in infrastructural development.

The policy of the DMK and especially the AIADMK seems to have been to "donate". If, since 1967, Tamil Nadu has been slow to reform its structure of economic relations, it has been quick to develop ameliorative and welfare policies to offset the effects of this structure. MGR's "Midday Meals Scheme" offers one free meal a day to all children. Over 70% of appointments in the government bureaucracy are made on the basis of quotas for Backward Classes and Scheduled Tribes. The same is true of admissions and scholarships for education at universities and colleges. In 1981, the government wrote off millions of rupees owed in unpaid electricity bills by tens of thousands of farmers. It employs over a million handloom weavers in otherwise unproductive work In 1981, it took over the bankrupt Buckingham and Carnatic Mills in Madras city in order to avoid destitution for the million and a half workers and their dependents. Yet these entitlements for the poor are manifest only in the form of largesse, the poor are not encouraged to claim them as rights, as was made clear time and again when the police were turned on striking workers or on the protesting Adi Dravida labourers of Thanjavur MGR's populist schemes have been paid for by the poor themselves, through sales tax and food procurement from farmers. Further, the Midday Meals were financed by the Central five year plans and the 1981 take-over of the B and C mills was funded by the Reserve Bank of India.

Despite the anti-Forward caste slogans, the position of the Adi Dravidas has worsened

under DMK/AIADMK rule; they have suffered increased social exclusion. Nothing has been done about the condition of the landless Adi Dravida labourers in Thanjavur, except to repress them brutally when they dare to organise. There has been a watering down of the anti-Brahmin thrust since 1967, and of untouchability as an issue

Since the mid-1970s, the state's economy has been on the decline and development has slowed down, due to mismanagement by the DMK/AIADMK. Over the last decade, the extent of poverty in the state has increased; in the census of 1981, 63% are listed as being below the poverty line. Yet the success of the rhetoric and symbolic gestures has been such that popularity of the AIADMK under MGR soared, and he was seen as "a friend of the poor" [29]

On its return to power in 1989, the DMK under Karunanidhi made some attempts at strong policy making, such as the smashing of the liquor barons But the urgency of establishing popular support, after 13 years in the wilderness, required the DMK to revert to the populist gestures of its predecessor.[30]

Relations with the Centre: When the Congress was in power in the 1950s and 1960s, the DMK made much of neglect by the Centre, yet Tamil Nadu enjoyed unprecedented growth under the first three five year plans. It was one of the first states to achieve full electrification, its share of development expenditure was disproportionately high, and it was one of the top three states in economic performance When the DMK came to power in 1967, it reversed its militant anti-Delhi stance, and since then the national government has always enjoyed support from the Tamil Nadu ruling party.[31] The AIADMK under MGR had established links with the Congress (I) since the mid-1970s. Meanwhile, Karunanidhi's DMK, during its years out of office, found itself moving closer to the opposition to the Congress, and it came to power in 1989 as part of the National Front, a coalition of parties put together to defeat the Congress This helped when the National Front government was in power at the Centre, during 1989 and 1990, but its fall considerably weakened Karunanidhi's position vis-a-vis the Centre, and his government was dismissed by the Centre In 1991, the AIADMK led by Jayalalitha, in alliance with the Congress party, emerged victorious It had campaigned against the increased lawlessness due to DMK's support for the LTTE, and saw the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in 1991, allegedly at the hands of LTTE extremists, as vindication of its stand [32]

Relations with Other Parties: The 1991 elections saw a complete decimation of the DMK. Of all its candidates, only Karunanidhi succeeded in retaining his seat with a slim majority The AIADMK-Congress(I) alliance made a clean sweep. DMK's allies in the election — the Janata Dal, CPI and CPI(M) — won one seat each, as did two members of a breakaway faction from the AIADMK The Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK), which represented the Vanniyars, a backward caste, won one seat. This party has gained popularity in the traditional strongholds of the DMK, and thus cut into its base.

The Congress had been greatly weakened by its defeat in 1967. Its traditional power bases were in shambles, and its network of grassroots activists no longer viable at any level of government It still retained the support of traditional loyalists, however, and was faced with the alternative of trying to regain hegemonic status in state politics or of aligning itself with one of the regional parties With the erosion of its mass base and its lack of committed cadres, it could not compete with the DMK or AIADMK to take the former option. However, by the mid-1970s it had worked out a strategy for coalitional politics and had begun to woo the AIADMK Gradually, the dynamics of electoral competition also underwent a transformation, with the emergence of a national electorate in the state that supported the Congress in parliamentary elections and a regional party in state elections. The alliance of the Congress(I) with the AIADMK represented a convergence of national and regional interests for the voter, which acted in favour of the two parties in 1991.[33]

After 13 years of unfulfilled promises by the MGR government, the DMK in 1989 had come to represent the intertwined causes of Tamil nationalism and social justice. Despite the contradictions of its ideology and policies, then, its defeat in 1991 was seen as the decisive end of Dravidian politics in the state Jayalalitha, a Brahmin herself, made no bones about appointing Brahmins to key positions, and her victory was trumpeted in Brahmin-run newspapers. Her coming to power in alliance with the Congress(I) formally marked the end of Tamil nationalist politics.[34]

C: WEST BENGAL

The Congress ruled in West Bengal from Independence until 1967, winning well over 50% of the seats in the state assembly in the first three general elections. While its support was fairly evenly balanced in rural and urban areas, it was drawn mainly from middle-class

elites and relied heavily on personalities It did not have significant influence among industrial workers, marginal owner-cultivators, landless labourers and students.

By 1967, B.C. Roy, a veteran Congress leader, had died, another, Ajoy Mukherjee, had left the party, taking a number of MLAs with him; the war with Pakistan had alienated much of the Muslim population, which had shifted its allegiance to the Bangla Congress Meanwhile, the United Front (UF) of various left opposition parties, which had been contesting elections in West Bengal from 1952 on, gained dramatically in strength Its strength rose from 42 seats and 27.5% of the popular vote in 1952, to 133 seats and 46 6% of the vote in 1967 On the other hand, the Congress's share of the vote went down from 150 seats and 38 9% of the vote in 1952 to 127 seats and 41.1% of the vote over the same period The electoral success of the opposition parties was attributable to the failures of the Congress, as well as to their own ability to mobilise protest in the form of strikes and bandhs against the food crisis, especially from among the ranks of the youth, industrial workers and the village poor, and to present a well-organised and viable political alternative in the form of a left alliance willing to go the parliamentary route The rightist opposition — the Hindu Mahasabha, and Jan Sangh — was virtually non-existent then as a political force in West Bengal.[15]

The United Left Front government that came to power in 1967 was a coalition of 14 separate parties, reflecting a broad ideological spectrum on the left, dominated by the CPI(M), followed by the CPI. However, tensions remained between those parties that stood for social democratic reform, like the Bangla Congress and the Socialist parties, and those like the CPM that saw the UF government as an instrument of struggle. In addition, there arose a more leftist trend within the CPI(M) which supported the armed peasant struggle in Naxalbari, this led to a split in the CPM and the formation of the CPI(M-L). Capped by the manoeuvres of the Congress at the Centre and in the state, this created an atmosphere of political chaos that justified the imposition of President's Rule in November 1967. This, however, only prompted the United Front to mend its cracks and contest the mid term poll of 1969, when it won a resounding 214 of the 280 assembly seats. The CPI(M) was dominant again, having won 80 of these seats. This UF government remained in place for thirteen months before it, too, collapsed in March 1970, due to internal fighting between its constituent members, and President's Rule was imposed. The years 1971 and 1972 saw coalition governments led by the Congress(I). The first coalition government, with the United Left Democratic Front (ULDF) -

a four party coalition led by the CPI — fell within one month of coming to power.[36] The second coalition was with the CPI.[37] The Congress remained in power until the 1977 elections at the end of the Emergency, when the CPI(M) and its allies returned to power with a resounding 46.4% of the popular vote and 229 of the 280 seats. The latter alliance has since maintained its position, with 238 seats (52.6% of the vote) in 1982, and 251 seats (51.06% of the vote) in 1987, and 244 seats out of 294 in 1991.[38]

Kohli[39] points to the roots of Bengali political exceptionalism (in being governed for fifteen years by a left government), as lying in the state's history and social structure. Modern Bengali politics has been dominated by an upper caste, well-off and educated minority, the "bhadralok", which has entered all strands of political organisation, radical, conservative and reformist, but which has been more predisposed than elites elsewhere to take up some or other kind of radical, left-wing politics. In addition, caste hegemony was never well established in West Bengal and caste associations have never provided the basis for state-wide political mobilisation. The caste structure is marked by a degree of pluralism at the top and weakness of caste identity at the bottom, explained by the fact that both access to land and educational opportunities have historically been shared by a number of castes.

Bengali social structure also contributed to the success of the CPI(M) through the fact that Bengali society failed to generate a commercial and entrepreneurial impulse from within, so that urban commerce and industry in West Bengal came to be dominated by non-Bengalis. These non-Bengali entrepreneurs were quick to move away from Calcutta at the slightest sign of trouble, and were also not concerned to put their weight behind a coherent non-communist political force within West Bengal, preferring instead to intervene through the government at the Centre. This has allowed the CPI(M) to couch its radicalism in an anti-centre Bengali nationalism, and to draw support for itself as a Bengali party.

Social Base: The Communist leadership, like the old Congress leadership, belongs to an educated, upper caste, elite minority. Kohli[40] goes on to argue that, while the party has to make concessions to those who hold social power (the propertied classes), and is thus more reformist than revolutionary, it nonetheless is not controlled by the property owning groups, but rather, is allied with the middle and lower classes. The crucial difference between the Congress and the CPI(M) is the ideological orientation, not the social background of either the

leadership or the party support The Congress does, of course, draw somewhat more from the landowning and business classes and the communists from the lower classes, while the intermediate leadership of the CPI(M) has come to rest more on the "middle strata" than on the village chiefs who form the backbone of the Congress For instance, the local government elections of 1979 and 1983 saw 87% of district level seats, 74% of block level and 67% of village level seats captured by those running on the CPI(M) ticket Most of these new office-holders were party sympathisers rather than members, a large majority being small landholders, teachers and others from rural lower- and middle-income groups This also makes it clear that the CPI(M), while being electorally supported by the poor, is not a party of the poor in terms of its leadership or cadres, but rather of the lower-middle and middle classes

While in the early years of its power, much of the CPI(M)'s support was concentrated in urban areas, especially among Calcutta intellectuals, the need for electoral majorities caused it to turn to the countryside. The breakdown of the zamindari system and the increase of absentee landlordism, and thus the decrease of direct landlord control over the political choices of villagers — as well as the capitalisation of agriculture and the growing immiserisation of the larger part of the peasantry — had released a potential electoral base for the CPI(M) [41] Increasingly then, over the last two decades, the CPI(M) has become a rural party both in terms of voter base and in terms of its program, the two being mutually reinforcing. It is no longer the urban protest movement of disgruntled white-collar workers, East Bengal refugees, industrial workers and middle-class students that it was in the 1960s [42] For instance, in the 1984 Lok Sabha elections, of the 3 million new entrants into the electoral rolls, most of them obviously youth, a large proportion voted for the Congress(I) The CPI(M) lost the two Calcutta seats it held as well as the adjoining Dum Dum, Barrackpore, Howrah, Serampore and Hooghly seats, all of which have large working class concentrations In the 1987 state assembly elections, the CPI(M) lost some of its old seats in areas with a large working class constituency, such as greater Calcutta and the industrial belt of Burdwan district However, in the 1991 Lok Sabha elections, the Left Front recovered its supremacy in the industrial belt [43] The West Bengal unit of the CPI(M) admitted at its 1992 conference at Siliguri that less than 50% of its members are workers, agricultural labourers, sharecroppers and poor peasants. About 48,544 of its 189,772 members in 1992 were middle-class employees, middle peasantry and school teachers. There were 8,628 women and 27,487 unemployed people

among the members Membership grew from 33,000 in 1977 to 189,772 in 1992, i.e., almost 90% of the members have joined the party since it came to power in 1977.[44]

There is also evidence that many non-Bengali urban workers have shifted their allegiance from the CPI(M), as have Urdu-speaking Muslims in some pockets, the former perhaps due to the Left Front's intense support for Bengali sentiment on the Gorkhaland issue, the latter due to the rising fundamentalist backlash across the country.[45] The 1992 party conference expressed concern that, while a large number of Hindi and Urdu speaking people lived in the state, their membership in the party was small.[46] This fact has particular significance in the context of this study because non-Bengalis make up a large part of the urban workforce

Ideology: As mentioned before, the ideological moorings of the various parties making up the Left Front ranged from social democracy to far more militant revolutionary struggle. This last tendency, however, has increasingly of late either dropped out of the alliance or become moderated The dominant partner in the coalition, the CPI(M), began with a commitment to "class warfare" through land grab and elimination of class enemies, with the ultimate objective of "dictatorship of the proletariat". Its leadership remains in the hand of those who began their political careers in pre-independence terrorist organisations. Many of them accepted parliamentarism as a tactic in the post-independence era, but over the years the need to capture and hold an ever increasing power base has turned the party ever more reformist. The party's concern now seems to be with preserving democratic institutions and using state power to "facilitate development with redistribution". Considerations of attracting and retaining industrial capital and, in the countryside, of forming alliance between the poor and middle peasants, have also led to a tempering of militancy. The party remains committed, however, to organisational discipline and to a social democratic outlook.[47]

Leadership and Organisation This aspect has been referred to in the other sections — a committed middle-class intellectual leadership, intermediate classes in the middle-level leadership, a cadre base, and tight party discipline While party discipline militates against open factionalism, coming to power has meant some degree of factionalism. However, there is little of the defecting, breaking and rejoining that one saw in Maharashtra. Party discipline

creates a strong link between party leadership and the cadres, which enables the translation of organisational goals into grassroots action. Since the party cadres are also ideologically disciplined, it means that relatively fewer of the values and hierarchies of society enter the party. After the experience of the short-lived UF governments of 1967 and 1969, both of which collapsed in part due to infighting within the coalition, the CPI(M) and its minor partners have agreed to use consensus and negotiation rather than majoritarianism as the method of decision making. This seems to work, for both the CPI(M) and its partners need each other.[48]

Public Policies: The first UF government was faced with a deteriorating industrial situation, because of the Left's militancy against business. As well, all the industries in West Bengal had reached the point of saturation in terms of providing employment. The situation in the countryside was equally tense, with growing numbers impoverished by the concentration of wealth in a few hands. The UF government fixed minimum wages in thirteen major industries. It mobilised against the eviction of sharecroppers, redistributed lands among the landless, and insisted on the payment of minimum wages to agricultural labourers. Its best known policy, however, was its decision not to use the police to suppress struggles of the people, in order that mass organisations may be strengthened. This unleashed a period of strikes and "gheraos" in West Bengal, which led to a huge outcry among the industrialists, and established a reputation for Calcutta as being inhospitable to capital. The second UF government saw some successes — 300,000 acres of surplus lands were acquired and distributed to the landless and poor peasants, better wages and living conditions were secured for the nearly 300,000 employees in the jute and tea industry through negotiation with the employers, and striking textile and engineering industry workers were assisted in gaining a substantial wage increase.[49]

Since 1977, the CPI(M) has turned from "struggle" to "administration" and has implemented three major policies in the rural areas. The first, Operation Barga, provides land, credits and other forms of security to sharecroppers and marginal farmers, as well as minimum wages and pensions for agricultural workers. Groups of bargadars (sharecroppers) had to be formed first, for many were unwilling to register their names individually for fear of reprisals from the landlords. Whereas in the first three decades after Independence, fewer than 60,000

sharecroppers were registered in West Bengal, the CPI(M) succeeded in registering over 1.2 million in its first five years of office The second policy was the implementation of the Food for Work Programme (FWP) which generates about one month of extra employment a year for one-third of all landless households in West Bengal The third policy brought about the revival of Panchayati Raj (local government) institutions. Elections to village and municipal councils were held for the first time when the CPI(M) came to power in 1977. About one-fifth of the budget appropriations of the state are channelled through panchayats and municipal councils, which enables concrete action at the local level. The mobilisation of peasants for all these initiatives was done through the Kisan (peasant) Front but also through numerous new local bodies and committees such as the Mahila Mandals (women's organisations) and Yuvak Mandals (youth organisations) Some social security measures for government employees and teachers have also been instituted [50]

On the industrial front, the government has been trying to woo industry, through major concessions to a number of industries in the form of tax cuts, and through incentives such as that of a disciplined and communally undivided workforce.[51]

It has been argued that the CPI(M)'s most significant contributions have been made in the rural areas The CPI(M) has also been credited with creating conditions of relative freedom from gangsterism, caste and communal clashes and corruption in the administration.[52] This situation may, however, be changing, with reports of increased gang violence in Calcutta by some CPI(M) cadres and their hired goons, the revelation that Jyoti Basu's son had been given preferential treatment in obtaining contracts, increasing corruption and nepotism, and the incidence of hitherto unprecedented communal clashes.[53] Nonetheless, the achievement of the LF in checking these for nearly 15 years should not be minimised.

Relations with the Centre A not insignificant part of the rhetoric of the LF government seems to be the theme of discrimination by the Centre in the allocation of finances. There is likely to be some truth in this accusation, for the Congress government at the Centre has not been known for its disinterested allocation of resources between the states. However, much of the state government's deficit is due to its own policies, such as the food for work programme for which the Centre withdrew support, or the deterioration in the working of state enterprises [54]

Relations with Other Parties: The Congress(I) remains an important actor on the West Bengal scene. In the Lok Sabha elections of 1984, the Congress(I) won 16 out of 42 seats compared to 4 in the 1980 elections. In the process, it defeated many senior CPI(M) and other LF members. The Congress(I) received 48.37% of the popular vote as opposed to 36.47% in 1980, a gain of 11.90% (compared to the LF's gain over the same period of only 4.86%). Since the voter turnout was higher in 1984 than in 1980 (75% as against 71%), it appears that most of this increase in votes was pocketed by the Congress(I). While some of the success of the Congress(I) in the 1984 Lok Sabha elections could be accounted for by the nation-wide sympathy wave after the assassination of Indira Gandhi, much of it was due to the fact that people no longer saw the CPI(M) and the LF as entirely principled or militant.[55] The continued strength of the Congress(I) in West Bengal despite fifteen years of Left Front rule has caused Chatterji to characterise the political system in West Bengal as a two-party system.[56]

Some interesting observations can be made through a comparison of the above party regimes. The social bases differed in each case — a dominant rural caste in Maharashtra, the petty bourgeoisie in Tamil Nadu, and a mixture of lower and middle classes in West Bengal, with caste not being clearly identifiable as a source of power in the latter two states. However, while caste formed the basis of Congress power in Maharashtra (albeit a caste also possessing economic power), the mobilising ideology of the Maharashtra Congress has never been explicitly casteist. Rather, it has appeared non-ideological, or pragmatic and flexible in its ideological affiliations. However, in so far as it has been able to affirm a common Maratha identity regardless of the actual class differences of its members, it is similar to the DMK which rallied support around the notion of a common Tamil identity, irrespective of class. The CPI(M) has an explicit class ideology which, however, is blurred by the fact that many of its leaders are from the upper castes and classes, it represents, in reality, an alliance of classes. The differences in ideology and social base are reflected in the different organisational structures of the three parties, as seen above.

Another interesting comparison has to do with the ruling party's relationship with the central government. Although regional nationalism was the explicit rallying cry only of the DMK, the CPI(M) also used, and benefitted from, the anti-Centre sentiment of the Bengalis.

In fact, the CPI(M) has remained the most alienated from the government at the Centre because of ideological differences, while these did not prove immutable in the case of the DMK. And while the Congress in Maharashtra has remained within the Congress system, the struggle between the elite pluralists and the populists may be seen as representing the resistance of the power base of the state Congress against Central interference.

2: INDUSTRIAL PROFILE

The early industrial profile of the three states under study was touched upon in the last chapter since these were also the states with the earliest industries. However, the profile has changed over the past century, particularly since independence, and even more so since the 1970s.

A comparative look at the earlier industrial profiles of the three cities will help to situate the nature of their future development. Apart from the fact that most of the major industries during British times were located in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, these towns were also the chief ports in the country for a long time. A look at Table 4 will provide a sense of the size and variation of the early workforce in these major centres. The absolute number of workers for the whole of India and for Madras increased between 1921 and 1931, although it was less than in 1901. In the case of Bombay and Bengal, however, not only did the numbers decline between 1901 and 1931, but the sharpest decline was between 1921 and 1931. Table 5 shows how the number of workers declined in all the industries in Bengal over this period, and in all except the chemicals industry in Bombay. In Madras, by contrast, all industries, except the building industry, registered a rise in the number of workers over the same period.

Chattopadhyay[57] explains the similarity in the trends displayed by Bombay and Bengal and their difference from the Madras trend in terms of the dominance of the Calcutta and Bombay ports in India's international trade, which made them most vulnerable to the depression of the 1930s. Using the scale of import of machinery into India as a measure of industrialisation, he shows how this import declined sharply during 1930-32 (see Table 6). This decline in the import of machinery did not result in a decline in the workforce of Madras because the value of capital goods imported into Madras was always much smaller than in the

other two states. Modern industries in Madras were not very developed and exports from Madras consisted mainly of agricultural commodities. With the slump in world demand for these commodities and the shift in the terms of trade between agriculture and industry against the former, owners of capital in Madras were no longer interested in investing it in agriculture, and chose instead to invest in industry, especially the cotton textile industry.

A: MAHARASHTRA; BOMBAY

The first industry in Bombay was cotton textile manufacturing, set up in the 1860s-70s mainly by Parsi and Bania businessmen. However, Western capital was also important and there existed a great deal of collaboration between Indian and European businessmen. The docks and railways, and shops and offices to support them, soon came up. Later came engineering, metal working, chemicals and printing, and especially after World War II, consumer goods, man-made fibres, petrochemicals, pharmaceuticals and electronics.[58]

Bombay is the textile manufacturing centre of the country. 40% of the country's textile output and almost 60% of its textile exports are produced here. According to Labour Bureau statistics, close to a quarter of all textile workers in India work in the Bombay mills. One third of the weaving capacity is located in Bombay.[59]

During the early 1950s, as the domestic market was effectively protected, the cotton mill industry grew, as did per capita cloth consumption, and exports. However, a number of factors combined to pull down the industry. First, the state's emphasis on building up the heavy industrial base, as outlined in the second and third five year plans, restricted investment, and hence technological change, in the consumer industry, particularly textiles. The plans discriminated against the mill sector in favour of the handloom and powerloom units since the latter were more labour intensive. This period also saw the rise of the decentralised sector in terms of cloth production, and the decline of the relative profitability of the cotton textile industry. Second, with macroeconomic changes in the terms of trade in favour of agriculture, the price of raw cotton went up in relation to that of finished cotton. Third, the 1960s saw a fall in the per capita consumption of cotton in favour of man-made fibres, due to the relatively lower cost and greater durability of the latter. Fourth, the share of textiles in exports also declined over the years because of the rise of new competitors on the international market. In 1963 India was the fourth largest exporter of textiles, by 1982 it had fallen to sixteenth

Textile export earnings as a percentage of total export earnings fell by 15.5% between 1950-51 and 1966-67.[60]

As a result of the above factors, some mills made the decision to siphon out profits and reinvest them in other more profitable non-textile industries, and to declare the mills "sick". Consequently, the mill industry became heavily concentrated, with nine business houses coming to control about 70% of the country's private mills. Thus, the 1970s saw the emergence of two almost mutually exclusive sectors in terms of the market segments to which they catered. One was an oligopolistic segment, where a few firms produced for the internal upper class and the export market, and high profit margins made technological change possible. The mills in this segment typically belonged to the big business houses, such as the Tatas, Birlas and Mafatlals. The other was a non-oligopolistic sector where price was determined by market conditions subject to collusion between the producers. The low level of productivity in this sector prevented technological change and hence undermined its competitiveness relative to the decentralised sector. Thus, the cotton textile industry contains both the country's "sick" mills and its "blue-chip" companies.[61] In addition, through the nationalisation of "sick mills", the government came to control nearly a sixth of the textile industry.

Another outstanding feature of the industrial profile of Bombay is the significant presence of multinational capital, especially in the more profitable technologically sophisticated industries such as petrochemicals, pharmaceuticals and electrical engineering. The first phase of expansion of these industries was well before the 1950s when plants were set up in areas vacated by the textile industry, such as Sewri where Lever Bros, Colgate, Brittania and Firestone were established by the 1940s, or Worli where Glaxo and May and Baker were established during the same period. In the early 1950s Stanvac and Burmah Shell established oil refineries in Trombay (these were subsequently nationalised); later Union Carbide established a petrochemicals unit in the same area. The second phase of expansion took place in 1955-63 when a short period of liberalisation closed the market to foreign exporters but opened them to investors. While expansion within the municipal limits of Bombay came to a halt by the early 1970s, partly due to physical saturation, plants continued to be set up within the general labour market area of Bombay, on a 25 km stretch on the Thane-Belapur road, until the end of the 1970s. The leading establishments on this road are again foreign controlled (Siemens, Philips, BASF, Pfizer), or foreign associated (Nocil with Shell, Polyolefins with

Hoechst), and most are fairly capital intensive. With the saturation of Bombay, the expansion continued into other industrial centres in Maharashtra, Pune expanded in the 1960s, mainly with engineering plants, and Nasik in the 1970s, through the related expansion of Bombay companies.[62]

Another important feature of the Bombay industrial scene is the burgeoning of small scale industries Bombay, including the adjoining Thane region, had some 17,366 registered small-scale industries in 1974, the largest concentration in India. (A far greater number of small-scale industries are unregistered). Ten major groups of industries accounted for 75% of small-scale units and 77% of small-scale employment — repair shops, chemicals, rubber, cycle manufacture, non-metallic minerals, basic chemicals, clays, motor vehicles, leather and glass In addition, there are industries like plastics, electronics, electrical goods, and engineering goods. These units are located in small workshops or in the industrial estates, both government and private, that have sprung all over north Bombay.[63]

The presence of the public sector is much smaller, and almost entirely concentrated in shipbuilding, offshore oil production, and petroleum refining [64]

In a survey of 110 establishments in Bombay, the highest wages (equivalent to a family wage[65]) were found among permanent workers in the multinational companies Some public sector units also offered a family wage to permanent workers. This, however, was not the case for all companies of either type. Upto the 1950s there was not much difference in the wage rates of enterprises under different categories of ownership within the factory sector. With the entry of multinational capital, however, and of industries like petrochemicals and pharmaceuticals, wage rates began to diverge, so that these new enterprises were soon paying 75 or 100 percent more than the rate in cotton textiles, which until then had been the leader [66] The workers in the small-scale industries, including construction, and the growing mass of contract and casual workers in larger industry are at the very bottom of the wage-scale.

B: TAMIL NADU; MADRAS

Madras originated as a port and as an administrative and trading post, but it also had a textile industry at the end of the last century After independence it saw a spurt in engineering industries Although there are a few multinationals and public sector enterprises in the city, it is dominated by family-owned business houses, a major part of the investment

coming from five families: TVS, Sivasailam of Simpson, M.V. Arunachalam of the TI Group, Eswara Iyer of Easun, and the Mapillais, all of them Tamil except the last. Much of the investment, especially of the family-owned business, is in light engineering. The first four houses listed above are almost exclusively in this business, the Mapillais are in rubber. Almost all the investment was made in the 1960s as part of a major industrialisation wave. The coming to power of the DMK government in 1967, and the consequently less than generous financial policies of the Congress government at the Centre towards Tamil Nadu, coupled with the chronic power shortages in Madras, severely limited subsequent growth and diversification. The little expansion that did take place was in Hosur, on the border with Karnataka, due mainly to government incentives to develop the area TVS, Simpson, English Electric and Ashok Leyland, among others, went there to expand.[67]

The light engineering industry is labour intensive; labour costs have always been high in Madras. Given the inability to modernise outdated technology and grow and diversify, the high labour costs, and the fact that those companies that once enjoyed a near monopolistic share of the market have begun increasingly to face competition, the scene in Madras has been characterised as one of stagnation and struggle to retain market share rather than of vibrant growth and prosperity.[68]

C: WEST BENGAL; CALCUTTA

The capital of the British Government of India until 1912, Calcutta was naturally the headquarters of the chief British trading companies, and the centre of the international trade for a vast hinterland, including the tea and jute plantations and coal mines of eastern India. European business here was well organised and maintained a near total monopoly on investment The first jute mill was set up in 1854. By 1877 there were 4000 looms in the jute mills, and between 1900 and 1920 the number of looms increased rapidly from 15,000 to 40,000 It was also around the mid-nineteenth century that the first railway line was opened, connecting Calcutta with the inland coal fields.[69]

Calcutta was also where the engineering and chemical industries began. The first big engineering firms (Jessops, Burns) supplied structural steel work to cotton and jute mills, to public works departments, and later to the railways.

After 1914, there grew a more diverse light engineering industry organised into smaller

units. This occurred mostly in Howrah, Calcutta's twin city across the Hooghly river. Small businessmen, especially of the Mahasiya caste (traditionally cultivators), set up workshops and brought in relatives or fellow caste members whom they employed for a while and then helped to set up their own units. These industries subcontracted from or supplied to the larger ones; there were some 9621 such small-scale units registered in Calcutta (not including Howrah, where there are probably far more) in 1974.[70]

With the partition of India in 1947, the best jute growing lands went to East Pakistan, and jute mills there, which were also more modern, began to provide competition for the Calcutta jute mills. Employment in the Indian jute industry fell by half in the following twenty-five years Calcutta began to experience a corresponding economic decline, based as it was on raw materials that were becoming obsolete, and on finished goods for which demand was falling in the world market. Although value added (but not employment) in engineering grew quite fast between 1959 and 1965, the industry was too dependent on railways and heavy engineering. The first reaction of the latter to any recession was to stop putting out orders to smaller firms, in order to keep their own workforce if possible. Unlike in Bombay where the pharmaceutical and chemical industry is based on petrochemicals, with growing local sources and supply, in Calcutta it was based on traditional raw materials like coal and alcohol The petrochemicals based industry is technologically more sophisticated than that based on the latter materials. In foreign markets the demand for jute gave way to man-made fibres The contraction of the jute industry in Calcutta did not see the rise of other industries to take its place, unlike in Bombay, where multinationals in the newer industries occupied areas left vacant by closed textile mills. Since 1965 one firm after another has run into trouble and some of the biggest have been saved from bankruptcy only by nationalisation or compulsory mergers imposed by the national government [71]

Jute is still the premier industry in West Bengal, however, employing a quarter of the labour in organised industry. The jute mills, except for some which are nationalised, are owned by Marwari business houses with strong interests in trading, both in jute fibre and in finished goods. The gains made by trading are very high both because the owners can monopolistically manipulate fibre prices at the point of purchase and product prices at the point of sale, and avoid paying both wages and taxes. There have been frequent cases of millowners selling raw jute when the prices are higher rather than processing it into fabric. There is little

incentive then for the trader-cum-industrialist to reinvest in production, and consequently, the technology used remains obsolete.[72]

The 1978-79 Annual Survey of Industries[73] lists the top industries in terms of gross output and value added in all the industrialised states as being electricity, chemicals and chemical products, and manufacture of food products. Manufacture of chemicals and chemical products was Maharashtra's top industry, basic metals and alloys that of West Bengal, and cotton textile Tamil Nadu's In Maharashtra, chemicals and chemical products and textiles together contributed 10% of the state's value added in the factory sector in 1978-79. In West Bengal, basic metals and alloys and jute contributed 33.7% of value added in the factory sector. The structure of industry seemed more diversified in Tamil Nadu, with five industrial categories having 10% of the value added in the factory sector.

Table 10 provides a picture of the relative importance of the different industries in terms of employment. While cotton textiles was the largest employer in Bombay and Madras in 1983, jute employed the most people in Calcutta The other major employers in Bombay in 1983 were chemicals, machinery and machine tools, and food products In Madras, they were food products, chemicals, repair services, and machinery and machine tools. In Calcutta, the major employers in 1983, besides jute, were base metals and alloys, transport equipment and parts, and machinery and machine tools.

The highest paying industries in 1983 (see Table 11) were transport equipment and parts, machinery and machine tools, wool, silk and synthetic textiles, base metals and alloys, chemicals and products, and electrical machinery and appliances. Thus most of the major employers in the three states were common, and paid among the best wages. However, the largest employers – cotton textiles and jute — ranked much lower, cotton textile being the seventh highest wage payer in 1983, and jute the eleventh. Interestingly, this position was reversed by 1985, with jute ranking as the fourth highest payer, and cotton textiles falling to the fifteenth rank This is significant in so far as it reveals that wages are tied to the type of industry, rather than, perhaps, to its location.

3: HISTORY OF WORKERS' ORGANISATION

Some general points can be made about the background of the workers in the three cities under study.

In Bombay, the bulk of the earliest workers came from other parts of Maharashtra itself, especially the central districts of the Western Deccan and Ratnagiri. However, over the last two decades of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, the number of migrants from the north grew; by 1921 there were over 70,000 Hindi speakers in Bombay. After World War I, the northern Maharashtra districts of Nasik and Ahmednagar also became a major source of migrants, especially of poor Mahars.[74]

Workers in Madras came from the province itself, and in fact from the villages nearest the industrial centre. Hindus formed about two-thirds of the workforce in 1918. The Adi-Dravidas (Untouchable castes) formed about 20% of the mill population in 1918, although they were only 12% of the population of Madras city.[75]

In Calcutta, before the 1890s, most of the labourers were Bengalis, but soon migrants came from the United Provinces, Bihar, Orissa, Madras and Central Provinces, and by the start of the twentieth century these migrants made up the majority. The 1921 census shows that of the approximately 280,000 jute mill workers in Bengal, only 24% were Bengali, mainly from Midnapur and Bankura districts[76], 33% were Bihari, 10% from Orissa, 23% from the United Provinces, 4% from the Madras Presidency, and less than 3% from elsewhere in India and abroad. The 1911 and 1921 censuses also showed that most workers were low caste and untouchable, cultivators with little or no land, members of traditional labouring and service categories and artisans from declining crafts. In 1929, 30% were Muslim, and a little over 69% Hindu. Non-Bengalis were less of a majority in the metal based industries and railway workshops, where the most skilled workers were Bengali.[77]

Which villages or castes were first recruited into a particular industry was largely a matter of chance, but once the pattern was established, it was often perpetuated, as workers' friends and relatives often followed them to the city and got themselves an introduction to the jobber or later to the factory manager. The 1931 Royal Commission on Labour noted that once a connection was established between a factory and a particular village, recruits would continue to come from there, while adjoining villages would send none. Often, one caste or

language pocket dominated a particular industry or trade In Bombay, for instance, foundry workers came from UP, and in 1921, 35 5% of the total workforce in the cotton textile industry was from Ratnagiri (in Maharashtra itself) [78]

Since most workers lived within walking distance of their place of work, it often meant that residential neighbourhoods were also formed on the basis of caste and regional affinities For instance, in Bombay 42% of all Poona migrants settled in E ward, 63% of Allahabad migrants in E ward, 43% of Jaunpur migrants in G ward and 30% of Ahmedabad migrants in F ward.[79] In Madras, the Adi-Dravidas congregated as despised and segregated groups in squalid slums known as cheris, as they had done in their native villages This tendency to cluster soon ended because of the population pressure in the neighbourhoods [80]

Links with the village remained strong and workers would regularly return to their village for the harvesting season or for some religious ritual or festival Workers would sometimes also return to their village permanently after having earned enough to see the family through an exigency, although this became almost impossible after 1920 or so because of the state of the rural economy.[81] In Madras, workers did not initially all settle down in the cities, periodically, many would return to their villages for good However, gradually a settled mill population did begin to grow, and most of it in the area around the mills [82]

An appreciation of the role of the jobber is crucial to the understanding of the early years of workers' organisation in India While the system seems to have been ubiquitous across India, particular significance has been attached to it in studies on Bombay. The jobbers were workers who had been promoted to do the work of recruitment, training and discipline and supervision of workers. The centrality of their role in the management of the mills becomes obvious when one recalls the social (in terms of region, religion, caste) and class distance between the owners, managers and supervisors and the workers The jobber built up a following among the workers both at the factory and in the residential locality by his acts of patronage and protection, so that if he moved to another factory, they often moved with him.[83]

Conditions of work within the factories were terrible Krishna[84] describes the factories in Madras: people were expected to work 12 hour days with only a half-hour break for the mid-day meal. Delay in returning to work after the meal would mean the gates were closed and the day's wage lost, if not a fine levied Safety and sanitation were not considered

concerns of the employers, and no concessions were made towards them. Leave was rarely granted, even under emergencies, and the employers had no qualms in dismissing those asking for better conditions. Very few mills provided housing for their workers, so that conditions at home were scarcely better than those at work. In Calcutta, the jute mill workers were among the lowest paid of the industrial workers in India. The average monthly wage between 1900 and 1939 was Rs 15.61; for textile workers in Bombay it was Rs 23.71. The wage was often not enough to support the jute workers' families and most left their families in the village, where they went to visit them periodically and sent money to meet expenses. Housing and health conditions were dreadful, and indebtedness chronic.[85]

The periods during which the most strikes occurred were common throughout India — and, thus, to the three cities under study — and in many parts of the world, following as they did the movement of prices and trade cycles. The first major period of strikes was between 1918 and 1921, with the consequences of World War I being felt in inflation and, in India, the cutting off of imports from England. Taking July 1914 as the base year (100), the wholesale price index went up to 190 in Calcutta, 203 in Bombay, and 208 in Madras, and 190 throughout India.[86] The first union organisations began to be organised in this period as workers sought outside leaders to help them to force employers to grant pay rises to compensate for the rise in prices of foodstuffs and other essential commodities. The second period was in the mid-1920s following a trade depression, when workers were again forced to act to combat its effects. The depression at the end of the 1920s saw another flare-up in militancy. The last such phase was at the end of the 1930s — 1937-39 — with the revival of economic prosperity and the workers' expectation that the newly established Congress ministries would be sympathetic to their cause.[87]

In what follows, I will narrate the history of workers' organisations and activities in the three major cities under study, and then go on to make comparisons between them.

A: BOMBAY

The earliest known workers' organisation was the Bombay Millhands' Association founded by S.S Bengalee, a Parsi journalist active in municipal politics, and N.M. Lokhande, a minor mill official and member of one of the non-Brahman social reform groups which existed sporadically between 1884 and 1893. The Association was aimed at influencing the

government's revision of the Factory Act through airing the workers' grievances about hours of work and other regulations. It had no formal membership, no funds, no rules, and depended on jobbers to bring an audience to the meetings The first body to resemble a trade union grew out of caste oriented welfare work, and was called the Kamgar Hitwardhak Sabha It was founded in 1909 by B R Nare, a weaving master, and two non Brahmin leaders, S.K.Bole and H A Talcherkar, and its committee was largely, though not exclusively, Maratha Its core members were the jobbers, through whom it reached out to some 10,000 workers. It had completely disappeared by 1925 or so The other welfare organisation among the workers was the Social Service League. Led by trained, full-time social workers, it saw itself as the pioneer of limited, practical reforms, and was theoretically not dependent on jobbers, nor politically involved, nor caste based. Its leader, N M Joshi, became one of the influential spokespersons for the workers at the national and official levels, he occupied one of the labour seats in the national assembly from 1921 until its dissolution in 1947, and was Secretary of AITUC from 1940 to 1947.[88]

For the first sixty years of the mills' existence, there is clear evidence of informal but resilient organisations of workers, apart from the welfare organisations Outsiders were unsuccessful in organising trade unions, yet the workers were able to launch strikes, maintain a steady rate of wages, and display other signs of effective leadership in the absence of any official trade union of the sort now recognised as one. Rarely a month went by without a strike in one of the mills Newman ascribes the leadership role to the jobbers, and there seems to be general agreement about this part of the analysis. However, the jobber could not organise strikes that involved several mills at once; rather, when grievances were widespread, parallel strikes would occur so that several thousand workers were simultaneously on strike, although this cannot be traced to any plan for concerted action. The general strikes of 1920, for instance, usually began as accumulations of separate grievances and only gradually began to acquire a distinctive character.[89]

The 1920s saw a shift in the nature of organising, for a variety of reasons These included (i) structural changes in the economy leading to a fall in employment, especially women's employment, and a consequent change in the role of the jobber whose recruitment function was now rendered redundant by the easy availability of surplus labour, (ii) the growing interest of the nationalists and the communists in organising the workers, and (iii)

legislative changes, such as the passing of the 1926 Trade Unions Act which called for the formal registration of unions [90]

The Girni Kamgar Mahamandal (GKM) formed during the 1924 general strike was an association of jobbers and other influential neighbourhood leaders. The Bombay Textile Labour Union (BTLU), formed in 1925, although an initiative of social workers and labour politicians like N M Joshi and R R Bakhale, relied upon jobber support for its functioning. Despite the fact that it had some 10,000 members by 1926, it remained politically moderate and never struck very deep roots among the workers The Bombay Millworkers Union was formed in 1928 by S H Jhabvala, and led after 1934 by R S.Asavale, a leader of the non-Brahman movement After 1925 the communists entered the field and turned to the GKM as a means to reach the workers [91]

Newman[92] has classified all the strikes recorded from 1918 to 1929 according to their cause The rarest motive for a strike was sympathy, shared grievances rather than pure sympathy were more often the cause for parallel strikes. Also rare were strikes over the behaviour of jobbers or departmental supervisors, or strikes over the dismissal of a worker, or over hours of work. The most important issues were economic issues — a threatened cut in wages or a demand for a rise in them, as well as other pay-related issues. Dismissal of jobbers was also a frequent motive for a strike, after economic demands and political demonstrations, which shows the extent of support that they commanded.[93]

Newman provides a table showing strikes to have clustered into three periods, corresponding to three phases of wage movement. The first period, from 1918 to 1920, was one of rising prices and profits The two general strikes of this period were preceded by demands for a cost-of-living bonus and followed by claims for strike pay. Since the mills were doing well enough for the employers to respond positively, the strikes were short and usually successful

The second period, from 1922-23 to 1924-25, was one of adjustment to a trade depression. 1922-23 saw a wave of minor strikes when employers made attempts to cut costs, and in 1924-25 there was a general strike. Strikes of this period were over a variety of demands, lasted a week or more, and almost always ended in defeat for the workers. Strikes against the dismissal of jobbers began to increase as employers reduced or reorganised their workforce and penalised their jobbers for threatening action against wage cuts. The 1924

general strike grew out of the workers' resistance to wage cuts, and brought most of the 82 textile mills to a close. Buttressed by the results of an official inquiry, however, the employers were not prepared to yield, and after about six weeks the strikers had to give in and resume work.[94]

The final period beginning from the end of 1927 is that of the accumulation of grievances which led to the great general strikes of 1928-1929. The 1928 general strike, which lasted six months, was directed chiefly against rationalisation and surreptitious wage reduction. The strike was led by the Girni Kamgar Union (GKU), which had been founded that year by communists working within the Girni Kamgar Mahamandal (GKM), and the Mill Workers Union (MWU). The 1929 strike was against retrenchment and the victimisation of the activists of the 1928 strike. Both strikes also raised demands having to do with working conditions. The 1929 strike ended in a burst of communal violence, with Hindu mill workers attacking the strike-breakers, mostly Pathan.[95] With the arrest of the communist leaders in the Meerut Conspiracy Case of 1927, and the coming to power of the Congress after the 1936 provincial elections, the GKU saw a decline and the Congress formed a textile workers union, the Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Union, which was later affiliated to the INTUC.[96]

The Bombay textile workers were a constituency no group interested in building a mass movement against the British could afford to ignore. Their centrality within the primary centre of Indian manufacturing industry made their loyalty to the state essential, and their disloyalty and militancy a vast source of power for the opposition. The first group to attempt to mobilise them was the All India Home Rule League formed by Annie Besant. Almost concurrent were the activities of the Indian Home Rule League consisting predominantly of Maharashtrian professionals, best known among whom was Bal Gangadhar Tilak. Tilak's imprisonment in 1918 brought a large number of workers out in support of a city-wide bandh to protest it. The non-cooperation movement and the Gandhi-led Congress never succeeded in establishing roots among the workers, mainly because of Gandhi's unwillingness to encourage strikes.[97]

Another movement of growing importance in Maharashtra was the non-Brahmin movement. This had emerged in the 1870s in the central and southern districts of the Deccan, and to some extent Ratnagiri, the very same areas from which the largest mass of Maharashtrian workers were drawn. It was natural, then, that this movement of protest against the social and religious predominance of the Brahmin caste, and its increasing role in money-

lending and land-ownership would find support among Bombay workers. A number of political linkages were formed among non-Brahmin groups in the city, and Maratha businessmen provided large amounts of cash for distribution to the workers by the jobbers.[98] The nineteen-twenties also saw the emergence of the communists, prominent among whom were S A Dange, R S Nimbkar, K N Joglekar, L.M Pendse, S V.Ghate, and S.S.Mirajkar. While active in building a base among the workers, the communists also participated in the national federation of labour — the AITU[illegible] — and in the Congress District Committees. Their role in trade union activity grew only after 1925 or so, Newman and Koonan[99] show, through a careful sifting of evidence, that the leading role supposed to have been played by them in the General Strike of 1924, for which they were arraigned in the Meerut Conspiracy Case, was a more accurate reflection of government paranoia than of reality. The communists were working within the Bombay Congress in this period, the left wing faction of which formed the Peasants and Workers' Party.

B: MADRAS

While little is known of the strikes prior to 1918, there is evidence that they were frequent but short-lived For instance, in 1878, soon after the Buckingham Textile Mill opened, there was a strike over the workers' demand that the mill close for a few hours in the afternoon to give the workers a rest. In 1889, workers in the Carnatic Mill struck work demanding a weekly holiday, and this caused a sympathy strike in the Buckingham Mill. The workers evolved no permanent organisations through these strikes and were easily victimised by an intractable management, supported by a government quick to suppress any activities it considered revolutionary or subversive.[100]

The urban centres of Tamil Nadu, particularly Madras and Madurai, experienced food riots in 1917 and 1918 in which the mill workers were involved. The workers in both centres made numerous approaches to the millowners for increased wages, and for better working conditions The problems of the Binny workers led them to a Parsi lawyer, B.P.Wadia, a nationalist and member of the Theosophical Society. Wadia formally inaugurated the Madras Labour Union (MLU) in April 1918 at a mass meeting of the workers. The MLU was the first organisation of workers in India to resemble a modern trade union, and its formation is generally seen as the beginning of formal labour organisation in India. While the MLU owed

its birth to the joint effort of the Home Rule Leaguers and Congress members, after B.P Wadia left the Home Rule Leaguers gave way entirely to the Congress Formed initially with a welfarist orientation, the MLU went on to conduct intense and long-lasting struggles in the textile mills.[101]

A number of other unions were formed in the same period and registered in the late 1920s and 1930s under the 1926 Trade Unions Act There seemed to be unions in practically every industry, such as the Public Works Department Workers' Union, the Madras Kerosene Oil Workers' Union, the Madras Port Trust and Harbour Workers' Union and the Madras Engineering Workers' Union, to name but a few [102]

Both Krishna and Murphy describe in full detail the strikes and lock outs that gripped Binny in the first wave of price rises. The 1918 strike was supported by other unions, such as the Printers' Labour Union and the Tramwaymen's Union, through donation of a day's wages. The Choolai mills went on strike a decade later, in 1928 There were strike movements in the Southern India Railway in 1918-33, and in the Madras and Southern Maratha Railway in 1932-33. Krishna[103] also describes a number of lesser known strikes in the years from 1918 to 1933 in a variety of industries, such as cement works, iron works, textiles, engineering and railway workshops, and the Burmah Oil Company. Most of these strikes were for reasons similar to the textile strikes — higher wages, a food allowance, shorter working hours, more holidays. A few were over the dismissal or victimisation of a worker While in many of them other unions came out in support, as in the case of the 1918 Binny strike, at no time was there a joint action of the entire working class of Madras presidency or even Madras city.

The Madras workers seem to have participated quite avidly in the nationalist movement. For a meeting organised to mark Khilafat Day in 1920, Tramway Union and Aluminium Company employees marched to the place of the meeting along with other Muslim processions shouting slogans of Hindu-Muslim unity A third Khilafat day in the same year brought Gandhi and Shaukat Ali to Madras where they were greeted by a crowd of 10,000, among them the workers of the Madras Electric Tramwaymen's Union, Kerosene Oilworkers' Union, Simpson and Co. Employees' Union, and Government Press Employees' Union. As for the communist movement, it seems to have taken the form mainly of communist leaders taking up the cause of workers, such as the major Southern India Railway strike of 1928 led by

Singaravelu, in which strike committees of the workers played a major decision-making role [104] There is no mention in my sources of workers' participation in the emerging Dravidian movement

C: CALCUTTA

Panchanan Sinha divides the labour movement in Bengal before World War II into three phases:

i 1880s to World War I In this phase the trade union movement was confined mostly to white-collar employees like the post and telegraph, railways and press. For example, in 1905, the Government of India employees in Calcutta went on a months's strike. This period saw the publication of the first working class journal — the Bharat Shramjibi — by Sasipada Banerjee in 1874. He also helped organise a district savings bank known as the "anna bank" and founded the Working Men's Institute in Baranagar. Others, like Dwarkanath Gangopadhyay, took up research into conditions of life and work in the factories and plantations

There were a number of sporadic strike movements in the last decade of the 19th century. The Budge Budge jute mill workers struck for nearly six weeks in 1895, for eight days in 1896, and twice in 1900. The causes for the strikes included the demand for the dismissal of the sardar or overseer. for leave for Bakr-Id or Muharram, or against wage reductions. In August 1906, at a rally of 2000 jute workers, the Indian Mill-hands Union was formed at Budge Budge

ii. Post World War I: From July to December 1920, there were 89 strikes in the Calcutta industrial area, 12 in the coal fields of Burdwan, 2 in Barisal, and 1 in Kharagpur. From January to March 1921, there were 334 strikes altogether. A Commission on Industrial Unrest in Bengal was set up, which reported that of the 137 strikes from July 1920 to March 1921, 110 were for higher wages. Of these, only 4 were definitely successful, 48 failed and the rest had indeterminate outcomes 244,180 workers were involved in these strikes, and 2,631,488 persondays lost The Commission also reported that while the above figures on unrest were consonant with international trends, numerous recent strikes were "due to comparatively petty causes which even a year ago would have created nothing more than passing local excitement "[105]

This period also saw the entry of nationalist leaders like C R.Das and J M.Sengupta into the field of labour In the early 1920s, the weekly "Shramjibi", dedicated to questions of the welfare and progress of the working classes, was set up and edited by Panchasikha Bhattacharji, also Secretary of the Bengal Workers' Union

In 1921 the Assam-Bengal Railway workers and employees struck work for 4 months to protest against the treatment of tea plantation labourers at Chandpur, Assam, who were employed in conditions of semi-slavery In May 1921 the tea-planters themselves went on strike, inspired by the non-cooperation movement The workers came to Chandpur, where they were stranded as the railway authorities were ordered not to issue tickets to them, and to send them back When they refused, they were attacked at night by the Police Commissioner and the Gurkha regiment. The incident provoked an outcry all over the country, at a meeting of women in Chittagong, ornaments were donated to fund the strike, steamer service workers joined the strike The whole land and water traffic to East Bengal was blocked for months, and an alternative water transport system devised to serve the strikers and non cooperators However, soon the moderate leaders, such as Gandhi and C F Andrews, began to oppose continuing the strike on grounds of public inconvenience Nonetheless, at a meeting at Chittagong, Gandhi told strikers not to return until they had received apologies and amelioration but to take to the charkha instead.

iii. 1927-1939: This was a phase of long strikes, often severely dealt with by the government, including the provincial government of Fazlul Haq. The strikes involved large numbers and drew out other unions in sympathy. In 1927, 40,000 workers of the Bengal-Nagpur railway at Kharagpur went on a four month strike While the strikers were mostly non-Bengali, the Bengali political leaders and intelligentsia came out in large numbers to support them, and a public meeting in Calcutta helped to organise relief for them.

The next major strike of the period was at the Lilloah railway workshop in March 1928 14,000 workers went on strike to demand the reinstatement of 2 dismissed workers. Again, police fired on the demonstration and two died. The strike went into its fourth month and saw support strikes by 80,000 jute workers, 3,500 cotton mill workers, 21,000 railway workers, and 10,000 met· workers.

Another major strike of the period was the Jute Workers general strike of 1929, which involved nearly 300,000 workers for three months. It resulted in production losses of Rs 17.11

million and loss in wages of Rs 2 75 million, and brought the millowners together in joint action under the Indian Jute Manufacturers' Association (IJMA) The causes of the strike included insufficient wages, insecurity of tenure, and oppressive management, the immediate precipitant being IJMA's decision to increase working hours The strike was led by the weavers, the most highly paid of the jute workers

The second general strike of the jute workers was in 1937 The provincial government led by Fazlul Haq was not very sympathetic, and collaborated with IJMA in implying that the strike had been initiated for political rather than economic reasons. There were again instances of police firing Most observers of the conditions in the jute mills agreed that there was an urgent need for a workers' organisation, even the Government of Bengal was moved to remark in 1939 that the industry was "full of anomalies which could never exist were there a properly organised jute workers' union". In addition, the situation of the mills in close proximity to each other made an ideal base for organisation Yet a striking feature of the jute workers' movement was the relative absence of strong and enduring unions. In 1945, only 18% of the workers, or 47,697 out of 267,193 were unionised, while in 1952, Indrajit Gupta, addressing the AITUC Congress, said 95% of the workers were not unionised. This absence of any enduring organisations is particularly intriguing given their tradition of militant and well organised strikes, especially in the 1920s.[106]

Saha describes a number of other strikes in the 1930s and early 1940s — the tramway workers, the cotton mill workers, tea plantation workers. The 1946 Port and Dock workers' strike led to a one day general strike in Calcutta.

During the Swadeshi and anti-partition movement of 1905-1906, conscious attempts were made by the nationalists to organise the working class, which drew upon a keen sense of nationalism among the workers The Bengal workers were also drawn into the nationalist movement During the anti-Simon Commission hartal on February 3, 1928, almost all the factories and mills of Calcutta, Howrah and their suburbs remained closed, as also the tramways and docks. At the Calcutta Congress in 1928, 30-50,000 workers gathered and passed a resolution for complete Independence [107]

There is some debate about the point at which Bolshevik influence began to be felt in the workers movement in Bengal. While there is clear evidence of the influence of the 1917 Soviet revolution on the organising of workers after 1924, even prior to that, the Government

was seeing the hand of the communists in everything, for instance, in the strike of the tramway workers in 1921. However, as the editor of the journal Mohammadi put it, "We do not believe that the Bolsheviks have succeeded in coming to India. These strikes are merely the outcome of hunger....reports of this menace make Indians eager to know all about the bolshevik creed."[108]

Some general conclusions can be drawn about the nature of pre-independence organisation in the three states. The level of militancy was high in all three. The strikes were often wild-cat strikes, initiated by the workers. It was often the better-off workers, such as the weavers in the cotton mills in Madras and Bombay and the jute mills in Calcutta, who initiated the strikes. The leaders they turned to, however, were invariably from the ranks of the better-educated, middle-class lawyers and social workers, often involved in nationalist or communist politics.

Caste and communal differences did not operate in the strikes or trade unions. However, these differences were used effectively by managements to break strikes, and this led to outbursts of communal violence. For instance, Adi-Dravida workers, much poorer and more dependent on mill work than the caste Hindus, were used by Binny's management in Madras to break strikes, and this led to animosity between the Adi-Dravidas and the caste Hindus.[109] Similarly, in Bombay, in 1929, many among the Muslim workers were persuaded to act as strike breakers, and the consequent conflict between them and the strikers got translated into a communal conflict.[110]

While conditions were bad in most industries in this period, the nature of the management also played a role in determining the frequency of disputes and the manner in which they were dealt with. The two major cotton mills in Madras were the Buckingham and Carnatic (Binny) and the Choolai mills. The former, British owned, was an outstandingly successful commercial venture. However, it did not pay the workers particularly well, arguing that if the workers were paid too well, they would only come to work when they ran out of money. Instead, it implemented an extensive welfare program. Its paternalistic concern for the workers did not extend to allowing them to unionise. On the other hand, the Indian owned and run Choolai mill, while financially weaker and unable to afford wages or welfare schemes comparable to Binny's, was more flexible in accepting union intervention in industrial disputes.

Newman traces the fact that some mills had significantly more disputes than others to differences in their managerial policy For instance, the Dawn and Jamshed mills were rarely disturbed while the four mills managed by Currimbhoy Ebrahim were frequently so. (He argues that the Parsis were relatively successful in maintaining peace, both because of their long experience and because they were not vulnerable either to the communal hostility that afflicted the Muslim managers, or to the cultural and linguistic misunderstandings that limited the British) [111]

Police repression and the use of Defence of India legislation was common, and continued, contrary to the workers' expectations, even under the Congress provincial governments of 1937 39 For instance, police protection was provided to strike-breakers in the Binny strike, and the stoning of the police party escorting the workers led to police firing which injured sixteen [112] In the 1921 strike of tea plantation workers in Chandpur, Bengal, the workers, who had arrived at the railway station and had been refused tickets to go on by the railway authorities, were attacked at night by the police and the army.[113]

Thus, as far as the pre independence legacy of organisation goes, the important point is that there were few significant differences between the three cities, and nothing that explains subsequent divergences in the nature of organisation.

In the immediate post-independence period as well, similar union systems emerged in the three states. Unions belonging to party-affiliated central union federations, such as AITUC and INTUC, were the norm. The 1950s and 1960s were also a period of legalism, of reliance on the government industrial relations machinery to settle disputes Educated social workers and lawyers continued to provide the leadership.

In the Bombay textile industry, the INTUC-affiliated RMMS continued to dominate. Attempts to challenge its position as the representative union in 1950 and again in 1959 were defeated by the Industrial Court, even though on both occasions the Registrar of Trade Unions had accepted the validity of the challenge and de-recognised the RMMS.[114]

A leader who best represents the legalism of the period is R J Mehta (who continues to be a prominent leader even today) His Engineering Mazdoor Union was the dominant union in the engineering industry While he began by using the state conciliation machinery, he grew increasingly to favour collective bargaining.[115]

In Madras, in the first two decades after Independence, when the state was governed

by the Congress, the nationalist leaders organised a labour wing within the Congress rather than join INTUC The Congress party and INTUC were not always on good terms, and the latter tried to destabilise the party's labour wing The fact that union and government were under the same leadership helped to resolve disputes expeditiously, and neutralised communist influence in the labour movement Since the state experienced a boom in industrial development in this period, the employers were quite happy to accept trade unionism as enhancing discipline and productivity.[116]

The Bengal Provincial Trade Union Congress (BPTUC), the state wing of AITUC, was the oldest federation in Bengal It had established itself in the engineering, jute, and cotton textile industries The split of the CPI into the CPI and the CPI(M) led to a split in the BPTUC, with most of the larger unions, such as the Bengal Chatkal Mazdoor (Jute Workers) Union, with a membership of 98,000, going with the CPI(M) In 1970, the unions affiliated with the CPI(M) were formally constituted into the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU).[117]

The West Bengal branch of INTUC (WBNTUC) was established at Independence, and gained a presence in the jute and engineering industries around Calcutta (as well as in the tea plantations in North Bengal and in the colliery belt and power plants) WBNTUC, CITU and BPTUC were the three largest trade union centres in West Bengal, with WBNTUC being particulary strong in the two decades after Independence when the Congress ruled West Bengal However, relations between the Congress party and WBNTUC were never smooth, with the leadership of WBNTUC divided between those who wanted to implement Congress policies and those who had more professional trade union concerns And, even by the late 1950s, there were reports of growing dissatisfaction with WBNTUC among workers because of its poor record on wages, rationalisation and unemployment, its exclusive dependence on government conciliation machinery, and its opposition to strikes

Among the other significant trade union federations in West Bengal was the Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS), which in the 1950s was a strong force in the colliery belt in Asansol and Raniganj, and in the Calcutta port and dock unions With the death of its two major leaders, and divisions among the socialists, it became much weaker The United Trade Union Congress (UTUC) was formed in 1949 by the four smaller Marxist parties of West Bengal (the Revolutionary Communist Party [RCP], the Bolshevik Party [BP], the Revolutionary Socialist Party [RSP], and the Socialist Unity Centre of India [SUCI]) It was strongest in the plantation

belt in North Bengal The UTUC split in 1959, with the breakaway SUCI forming a separate UTUC (Lenin Sarani)

The Bharat Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) was started in West Bengal in 1965, and by 1973 had established some following in small shops and commercial establishments. The National Front of Indian Trade Unions (NFITU) was set up in 1967 and has been attempting to organise hitherto unorganised groups like oil and lentil workers and cart-pullers. The Trade Union Coordinating Committee (TUCC) of the Forward Bloc grew out of AITUC and HMS in 1972. The National Labour Coordinating Committee (NLCC) was established in 1969 by dissident Congress members unhappy with the inaction of WBNTUC during the second United Front period in 1969

Thus, the nature of trade union organising in the 1950s and 1960s was not dissimilar in the three states, apart from the fact that Bombay had already witnessed the rise of an independent leader like R J Mehta, and West Bengal had a number of smaller, left-oriented unions

A point worth noting at this juncture has to do with the nature of the workforce in the three cities While Bombay and Calcutta continued to attract a large number of workers from other states, the Madras workforce remained mostly indigenous. As seen in the section on party regimes, this meant that regional chauvinist appeals nad the possibility of creating divisions among workers, as seen in the rise of the Shiv Sena in Bombay, or in the increased alienation of non-Bengalis from the CPI(M) in Calcutta. In contrast, the relative linguistic homogeneity of the Madras workforce — within itself as well as with the entrepreneurial class — had the effect not only of avoiding linguistic divisions, but also of blurring class distinctions.

Another revealing aspect of the nature of the workforce in the three cities concerns the spread of age and sex in the workforce From Table 9, which compares employment in factories according to age and sex for the years 1967, 1973, 1978, and 1983, it can be noted that Madras consistently had the largest proportion of child and adolescent workers in general, and female children and adolescents in particular. It also had the largest proportion of female adult workers This can have implications for the nature and strength of workers' organisation, because children are less able to independently formulate and present their demands, and are less likely to attract outside leaders as a constituency. Women, too, may be constrained from militant organising by factors such as the lack of time to do union work, traditional prejudices

that operate to keep them from doing so, greater inhibitions in establishing links with outside leaders and federations, these being male dominated, and the greater ease with which threats of violence can be used to control them.[118]

4: SUMMARY

This chapter traced the rise of the different political regimes in the three states under study, their industrial profiles, and the nature and history of workers' organisation till the mid 1960s in each of them. There was little significant variation between the states on the last aspect, with all three having had pre-independence histories of militancy and post independence situations of legalistic and party-affiliated trade unionism. The character of the workforce in the three major cities under study varied somewhat, though, with Bombay and Calcutta historically, and even today, attracting workers from all over the country, while Madras workers have tended to be from the state itself. The Tamil Nadu workforce was also distinguished by the high proportion of women and children which it contained.

There were some significant differences in the nature of industrialisation in each state. Bombay continued to attract the most foreign capital, Madras was characterised by industrialists native to the state; Calcutta had few native entrepreneurs, nor had it retained much foreign capital, while the Marwari and other Indian businessmen, who owned much of its industry, had also been quick to threaten to move out. Although the industries employing the most people in each state were similar, Bombay did seem to have more of the higher paying new industries, such as petrochemicals and pharmaceuticals.

The most significant difference between the three states appeared to be in the political regimes that governed them. These regimes drew on the very different social bases of the three states, and had developed quite different ideologies and organisations. Their reliance on, and commitment to, industrial workers, therefore, varied considerably.

NOTES

1. Atul Kohli, "From Elite Activism to Democratic Consolidation: The Rise of Reform Communism in West Bengal," in Francine Frankel ed., Dominance and State Power in Modern India (Delhi Oxford University Press, 1989), 369.

2 Rakhahari Chatterji ed., Politics in West Bengal: Institutions, Processes and Problems (Calcutta. The World Press, 1985), 7.

3. Ibid., 12-13

4. Jayant Lele, "Caste, Class and Dominance: Political Mobilization in Maharashtra" in Frankel ed., Dominance and State Power in Modern India, 190,; A.R. Kamat, "Politico-Economic Developments in Maharashtra: A Review of the Post-Independence Period," Economic and Political Weekly (EPW), 27 September and 4 October 1980, 1677.

5 Jayant Lele, "Caste, Class", 116-118, 152-153; Kamat, "Politico-Economic Developments in Maharashtra", 1628-1673

6 Lele, "Caste, Class", 166

7. Ibid., 178.

8. A good instance is the Monopoly Cotton Procurement Policy whereby the government buys cotton at a fixed rate from the producers, thus passing on the high price to the textile mills and handlooms who are its main purchasers.

9. Ibid., 178. See also Stanley Kochanek, "Briefcase Politics in India: the Congress Party and the Business Elite," Asian Survey, 25 (12), December 1987, 1278-1301.

10. The fact that the distinction between the better-off Marathas and the lower caste Kunbis has now all but disappeared, is itself an indication of the success of the illusion of openness. However, more serious challenges to this hegemony, such as that from the Dalits, have been met with extreme violence. See Lele, "Caste, Class", 181.

11 Ibid., 182

12 Ibid., 195-198

13 Ibid., 191-193.

14. Ibid., 198.

15 Ibid.

16 Kamat, "Politico-economic Developments", 1675.

17. Lele, "Caste, Class", 205.

18. R. Manivannan, "1991 Tamil Nadu Elections: Issues, Strategies and Performance," EPW, 25 January, 1992.

19. Two key ways in which colonial modernization undermined the historical structures of Tamil society were by laying the institutional foundations of private capitalism and by inventing a wholly false sense of Tamil "tradition". David Washbrook, "Caste, Class and Dominance in Modern Tamil Nadu," in Frankel ed., Dominance and State Power in Modern India, 243-244. For a comprehensive treatment of the entire Tamil nationalist movement, see Marguerite Ross Barnett, The Politics of Cultural Nationalism in South India (Princeton Princeton University Press, 1976) Barnett explores in some detail the shifts in the ideology of the movement and the contradictions between ideology and public policy

20. In 1957, when the participation was 49 3%, the DMK won 13 seats, in 1962, when the rate was 70.6%, it won 50; and in 1967, when it was 76 6%, the DMK won 136 seats and was able to form the government The support for the Congress did not change dramatically, falling only from 45.3% to 41.4% between 1957 and 1967. Ibid., 253

21. Ibid See also R.Manivannan, "1991 Tamil Nadu Elections", V Geetha and S V Rajadurai, "Dravidian Politics: End of and Era," EPW, 29 June, 1991.

22. Ibid., 220.

23. For instance, in 1961, 52% of the landless labourers in the state were not Adi Dravida (untouchable) and 52% of the Adi Dravidas were not landless labourers. This is not the case in Thanjavur, however, where landless labourers are a large proportion of the agricultural workforce and the large majority of them are Adi Dravida Ibid , 223-225.

24. Geetha and Rajadurai, "Dravidian Politics".

25. These inconsistencies and fluidities in interpretation were obvious from the time of EVR himself. For instance, EVR returned from Moscow in the 1930s preaching communism, yet a few years later he took his party into alliance with the Justice Party, a party of feudal landlords. Despite his calls for the redistribution of privilege, his movement was completely absent from the scene of labour unrest in the 1930s. Annadurai, too, originally devised a Marxisante analysis of society, but by the late 1950s he had abandoned it Yet both EVR and Anna continue to be idolised today as the fountainheads of Tamil nationalism and champions of the poor. Washbrook, " Caste, Class"

26. Ibid , 230.

27. Ibid., 216.

28. Manivannan, "1991 Tamil Nadu Elections", 165.

29. Washbrook, "Caste, Class", 216-218.

30 Manivannan, "1991 Tamil Nadu Elections"

31. Washbrook, "Caste, Class", 216-218.

32 Manivannan, "1991 Tamil Nadu Elections".

33. Ibid., 169

34 Geetha and Rajadurai, "Dravidian Politics".

35 Rakhahari Chatterji, Politics in West Bengal: Institutions, Processes and Problems (Calcutta The World Press, 1985), 6-7,14-15.

36 Marcus F. Franda, "Radical Politics in West Bengal," in Paul R. Brass and Marcus F. Franda eds , Radical Politics in South Asia (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1973), 207-208 For further details on politics in West Bengal, see also Marcus F. Franda, Radical Politics in West Bengal (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1971)

37 The vote received by the Congress (I) in the 1972 elections, was admitted even by its own state committee to have been rigged However, there were other reasons for the defeat of the Left such as its inability to unite or to recognise the changed circumstances. Chatterji, Politics in West Bengal, 96-97

38 Ajit Roy, "Deep-Rooted Stalemate," EPW, 18 April, 1987; Idem, "BJP's Rise as a Mass Force," EPW, 29 June, 1991.

39. Kohli, "From Elite Activism", 367.

40. Ibid., 369.

41. Other reasons for the CPI(M)'s turn to the countryside may be the influence of the Chinese model and the break from the Moscow inspired emphasis on the urban proletariat, as well as the success of the leftists among the peasants in Naxalbari.

42. Chatterji, Politics in West Bengal, 12.

43 Ajit Roy, "Erosion of Left Front's Traditional Base," EPW, 12 January, 1985; Idem, "Deep-rooted Stalemate"; Idem, "BJP's Rise".

44. "Workers a Minority in Bengal CPM," Times of India, 1 February, 1992.

45 Roy, "Deep-rooted Stalemate"

46 "Workers a Minority", Times of India.

47. Kohli, "From Elite Activism", 371.

48 Ibid , 372; Chatterji, Politics in West Bengal, 23.

49. Apurba Mukhopadhyay, "The Left in West Bengal Government and Movement, 1967-1982," in Chatterji ed., Politics in West Bengal, 83-85.

50. Kohli, "From Elite Activism", 380-385; Jyoti Basu, "Why we have the People's Trust Interview with Jyoti Basu," interview by Rafic Samhoun, World Marxist Review 10, (1989), Chatterji, Politics in West Bengal, 21

51. Mohan Ram, "Plaudits for Pragmatism," Far Eastern Economic Review, 12 December 1985; "In a Giving Mood", EPW, 28 March, 1981.

52. Ajit Roy, "West Bengal. Area of Silence," EPW, 21 March, 1987

53 Ajit Roy, "Competition in Low Politics," EPW, 13-20 June, 1992; "West Bengal Changing Scenario," EPW, 13 April, 1991; Prashanta Sen Gupta, "Politics In West Bengal; The Left Front versus the Congress(I)," Asian Survey, 29 (9), September, 1989, Biren Roy, "Calcutta Corporation Election," EPW, 20 July, 1985

54. S K., "Diminishing Returns from Blaming Centre," EPW, 13 April, 1985

55. Ibid.; Ajit Roy, "Deep-rooted Stalemate", Idem, "Area of Silence"

56. Chatterji, Politics in West Bengal, 25. While after the communal riots of 1984, the BJP polled only 0.51% of the vote in the state legislature elections of 1987 ("West Bengal Changing Scenario," EPW), in the Lok Sabha elections of 1991 it increased its share of the aggregate vote from West Bengal from 0.53 million in 1989 to 3 5 million, or from 1 7% to 12%. However, it still did not win even a single seat from West Bengal (Ajit Roy, "BJP's Rise as a Mass Force,").

57. Raghabendra Chattopadhyay, "Trend of Industrialisation in Bengal, 1901-1931," EPW, 29 August, 1981.

58. Mark Holmstrom, Industry and Inequality: The Social Anthropology of Indian Labour (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 55-57.

59. Debashish Bhattacharjee, "Unions, State and Capital in Western India: Structural Determinants of the 1982 Bombay Textile Strike," in R. Southall ed., Labour and Unions in Asia and Africa (London Macmillan Press, 1987)

60. They rose again in the late 1970s when the blue chip mills began to enter the export market due to the generous cash subsidies and entitlements for export promotion given by the state This however, did not change the situation in the non-oligopolistic segment. Ibid., 221.

61 Ibid , 219-221.

62. Jairus Banaji and Rohini Hensman, "Outline of an IR Theory of Industrial Conflict," EPW, 18 April 1987.

63 Holmstrom, Industry and Inequality, 132-36. The condition of the private estates is vividly described in Holmstrom, and of the workshops both in Holmstrom, and in Jeremy Seabrook, Life and Labour in a Bombay Slum (London: Quartet Books, 1987).

64. E.A. Ramaswamy, Worker Consciousness and Trade Union Response (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988), 17.

65 A family wage is defined as a wage sufficient to maintain and reproduce not merely the individual worker but also his/her family. In India, this amount is calculated on the basis of a family of four -- parents and two children. Dev Nathan, "Structure of Working Class in India," EPW, 2 May, 1987, 799

66 For instance, the average pay in the petrochemicals industry in 1981-82 was Rs. 1912.86, in pharmaceuticals, Rs 1583 22, petroleum with an average wage of Rs 1071.76 being the lowest paying in this category of higher paying industries -- which included chemicals and allied industries, steel, electricals and electronics, consumer items, engineering and petroleum. By contrast, the average wage in the cotton textile industry was Rs 842.66 in December 1981. Ibid., 800.

67. Ramaswamy, Worker Consciousness, 88.

68 Ibid

69 Holmstrom, Industry and Inequality, 57-58.

70 Ibid., 133-137.

71 Ibid., 60.

72. Ramaswamy, Worker Consciousness, 182.

73. S.L.Shetty, "Industrial Growth and Structure: As Seen through Annual Survey of Industries," EPW, 2 and 9 October, 1982.

74. Richard Newman, Workers and Unions in Bombay 1918-1929: A study of Organisation in the Cotton Mills (Canberra. Australian National University Press, 1981), 9-10. There is a fair amount of rich historical work on Bombay labour, centring mainly on the cotton textile industry See Georges Lieten, "Strikers and Strike-Breakers: Bombay Textile Mills Strike, 1929," EPW, April 1982; Radha Kumar, "City Lives: Workers' Housing and Rent in Bombay, 1911-47," EPW, 25 July, 1987, and "Family and Factory: Women in the Bombay Cotton Textile Industry, 1919-1939," Indian Economic and Social History Review, 20 (1), 1983, Dick Koolman, "Bombay Labour Once Again," EPW, 19 January, 1985, "Labour Legislation and the Working Class Movement The Case of the Bombay Labour Office, 1934-37," EPW, November 1981, and "Bombay Communists and the 1924 Textile Strike," EPW, 19 July, 1980. Raj Chandavarkar, "Workers' Politics and the Mill Districts in Bombay between the Wars," Modern Asian Studies, 15 (3), 1981; B.Bhattacharya, "Capital and Labour in Bombay City, 1928-29," EPW, October, 1981.

75. Eamon Murphy, Unions in Conflict: A Comparative Study of Four South Indian Textile Centres, 1918-1939 (Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1981), 68. Murphy looks at questions of caste and community among the nascent working class in the textile centres of Madras, Madura, Coimbatore, and Ambasamudram The other useful source on Tamil Nadu is Christopher Krishna, Labour Movement in Tamil Nadu, 1928-1933 (New Delhi. K.P.Bagchi and Co., 1989) which deals more descriptively with early organisations and industrial disputes throughout the region.

76. Panchanan Saha, History of the Working Class Movement in Bengal (New Delhi. People's Publishing House, 1978), 13. Saha provides a blow-by-blow account of disputes and organisation in Bengal. Also interesting is Dipesh Chakrabarty, Rethinking Working Class History: Bengal 1890-1940 (Princeton Princeton University Press, 1989) which uses the history of the jute workers to explore questions of caste, class and consciousness

77. Holmstrom, Industry and Inequality, 58

78. Ibid., 54; Kumar, "Family and Factory", 92.

79. Newman, Workers and Unions, 18-19.

80. Murphy, Unions in Conflict, 44-45.

81. Writing about Bombay, Newman states that city wages were crucial to the rural economy "Thousands of money orders were bought in Bombay post offices every month and dispatched to the villages, where conditions began to respond to the state of the urban economy." Newman, Workers and Unions, 15-16.

82. Murphy, Unions in Conflict, 45-46.

83. Ibid.; Chandavarkar, "Workers' Politics".

84. Krishna, Labour Movement, 30.

85. Holmstrom, Industry and Inequality, 10; Chakrabarty, Rethinking, 11.

86. Saha, History, 32.

87. Newman, Workers and Unions.

88. Newman, Workers and Unions, 11, 256-257.

89. Ibid., 1.

90. Ibid.

91. Kooiman, "Bombay Labour", 1808.

92. Newman, Workers and Unions, 62-63.

93 Newman concludes that the relative insignificance of protest over matters such as working conditions, hours, dismissals and welfare schemes, as compared to wage issues, demonstrated, to some extent, the workers' lack of commitment to industrial life due to their continuing strong links with the village which led them to view urban life as temporary. However, Kumar in her account of women in the cotton textile industry during the same period, has shown how a cut in working hours meant a cut in wages, but since the cut in hours of work effectively meant the abolition of rest intervals, lower wages meant less money for the same amount of work. She therefore sees the major issues of protest as having been cutbacks in the working day, cuts in wages, and cuts in the number of workers employed, i.e., all attempts to define the work day. Certainly for the women, the reduction in the flexibility of the work day was an important issue, as was the fact that they were being retrenched in disproportionately larger numbers than the men, and there is ample evidence that women initiated strikes on numerous occasions in the 1920s to protest mechanisation or retrenchment. Kumar, "Family and Factory", 110

94 Kooiman, "Bombay Communists", 1223.

95. Bhattacharya, "Capital and Labour"; Lieten, "Strikers and Strike-Breakers".

96 Chhachhi and Kurian, "New Phase", 267.

97. Newman, Workers and Unions, argues that this was never the aim of the nationalist leadership, since the District Congress Committees in the mill areas rarely took up the workers' own issues, and the Khilafat Committees established in certain Muslim dominated localities aimed at building a base for Muslim organisation that precluded a broad based unity across sections of the working class.

98. Ibid., 102.

99. Ibid.; Kooiman, "Bombay Communists".

100. Murphy, Unions in Conflict, 62-63.

101. Krishna, Labour Movement, p 60-64.

102. See Krishna, Labour Movement, 194-196, for a full list.

103 Ibid., 153 ff See table on p 165 for number of strikes per year.

104 Ibid., 168-177.

105 Quoted in Saha, History, 32.

106 Chakrabarty, Rethinking, 116.

107 Saha, History, 104. At the same Congress the workers almost forced their way into the pandal to demand assistance for the distressed jute workers at Bauria, a grant of Rs. 25,000 for labour organisations in every province, committees in every province for mass

organisations, and equal seats for labour leaders in the Congress Working Committee.

108. Saha, History, 63-64.

109. Krishna, Labour Movement

110. Strike breakers were used on a large scale first in December 1928 by Burmah Shell in its oil installations at Sewri. These strike-breakers were Pathan and clashes with them led to attacks on Pathan watchmen in cotton mills, and eventually to a regular Pathan hunt by the mill-hands (the Pathans were also the moneylenders in the mill districts), and to a generalised Hindu-Muslim riot. Even the industrialist G.D.Birla was moved to comment on "the way in which communal tension has been utilised by the millowners for ending the strike" Bhattacharya, "Capital and Labour", 42

111. Murphy, Unions in Conflict, 16, Newman, Workers and Unions, 61

112. Krishna, Labour Movement, 63.

113. Krishna, Labour Movement, 63; Saha, History, 64.

114. Chhachhi and Kurian, "New Phase", 267.

115. Ramaswamy, Worker Consciousness, 27-28

116. Ibid., 84.

117. Chatterji, Politics in West Bengal, 134-135.

118. It would be wrong to make categorical assertions about the non-militant role of women, however. Kumar, "Family and Factory", 106-107, shows how women were quick to protest when their jobs were threatened, as happened increasingly in the 1920s in Bombay; it was the action of women winders that initiated the 1932 strike in Sassoon Mills in Bombay.

CHAPTER IV: THE OUTCOMES FOR WORKERS

In this chapter I examine the situation of organised labour in the three states with respect to four major aspects. (1) relevant legislation; (2) nature and strength of workers' organisations; (3) labour disputes and the manner of their settlement; and (4) issues such as wages, productivity, and job security. I then provide a comparative analysis of the situation for labour in the three states.

1: LEGISLATION

A: MAHARASHTRA

This state has the greatest number of additions and modifications to the national labour and trade union legislation, although some predate the period under study. A key piece of legislation is the Bombay Industrial Relations (BIR) Act 1946, which attempts to meet the need for a representative union to regularise and ease the process of collective bargaining. Applicable only to the textile, sugar, transport, processing and art silk, banking, ginning and pressing industries, it establishes a sole bargaining agent for the industry in a "local area" in the form of a recognised and representative union. A union, in order to qualify to be representative, must be registered under the Trade Unions Act of 1926 and must have no less than 25% of the workers in that industry in the local area, determined, not through secret ballot, but by the verification of trade union returns by a labour officer. The Act also established the categories of primary union, with at least 15% of the membership of the industry in that area, and qualified union, with at least 5% of the membership. Primary and qualified unions could also collect subscriptions from members, discuss with the management the grievances of their members, and represent cases of dismissal of their members. The procedure whereby a rival union may apply for recognition, and cause the representative union to be de-recognised, is by no means simple.[1]

The Maharashtra Recognition of Trade Unions and Prevention of Unfair Labour Practices Act, (MRTUPULP) 1971 (1972)[2]: The Act applies to those industries not covered by the BIR Act but retains some of its essential provisions, such as that the representative

union must be registered under the Trade Union Act and that there can be only one representative union in an industry or undertaking in a "local area". A union to be granted recognition as representative must have as its members at least 30% of the workers in that undertaking, once granted recognition its status as sole bargaining agent cannot be challenged for two years. The unrecognised unions continue to have the same rights as under the BIR Act. The recognised union has the right to check-off, to nominate workers to the works committee, to represent an employee in any proceeding under the Industrial Disputes Act 1947, as well as to have the member representing the union at such proceedings regarded as on duty and paid accordingly by the undertaking [3]

The recognised union also has certain obligations. It cannot refuse to "bargain in good faith" with the management It cannot advise or actively support or instigate any strike considered illegal under this Act, the Industrial Court being vested with the power to cancel its recognition if it does so.[4] The recognised union cannot picket in such a manner that non-striking workers are physically deterred from entering the workplace, or "stage, encourage, or instigate such forms of coercive action as wilful 'go slow', squatting on the work premises after working hours or 'gherao' any of the members of the managerial or other staff."[5] Thus the more militant unions are effectively prevented from aspiring to representative status, whereas those unions that wish to retain such status have to be acceptable to both the employer and the government.

It has been argued that the MRTUPULP Act has created more problems than it was designed to solve, as inter-union disputes over recognition have defied solution, and unfair labour practices have been far from prevented. The two-thirds majority in favour of a strike required to make it legal has been seen as impractical and therefore ignored by most workers since, in any case, given the numerous restrictions on strikes, very few are likely to be legal [6]

The Maharashtra government was among the first to promulgate the Essential Services Maintenance Ordinance (Maharashtra) 1981, which banned strikes in industries such as oil, electricity, public works and transport, and empowered the government to include any other industry in the list of essential services. As noted in Chapter III, the Act gives the police extraordinary power to interfere in labour disputes and to make preventive arrests It has enlarged the concept of a strike to include all forms of agitation or protest, or collective refusal to work, and has classified as punishable, acts such as absence from work, refusal to work

overtime, or any other "conduct" which retards work. Thus all labour disputes may be converted into law and order problems. Of the various central trade union federations, only INTUC spoke out in favour of the ESMO.[7]

B: TAMIL NADU

The government here seems to have made the least attempt to change or widen national trade union legislation. Ramaswamy[8] mentions that the DMK government enacted an amendment to the Industrial Disputes Act, whereby unions raising wage demands could be forced to accept interim compensation from the government and let an adjudicator decide on their claims However, he cites no sources, and I have been unable to find references to this fact elsewhere

C: WEST BENGAL

The second United Front government passed the Trade Union (West Bengal Amendment) Bill, 1969, which provided for compulsory recognition of representative unions determined through secret ballot of the workers. However, Presidential consent for this Bill was withheld.[9] The attempt by the Left Front government to amend the Industrial Disputes Act in the direction of greater stringency towards employers was hotly contested and finally blocked by the Congress government at the Centre.[10]

2: NATURE AND STRENGTH OF ORGANISATIONS

A few general observations can be made about the trade unions in the three states. Firstly, in all three, there are far more state-level unions than central unions. From Table 12 it can be seen that while in Maharashtra and West Bengal the number of unions increased in a more or less steady fashion, the Tamil Nadu figures were more irregular.

The year 1983 (the last year for which I have data) sees West Bengal as having by far the largest number of state-level unions — 7298. This was over twice the number of state-level unions in Maharashtra in that year — 3042, and two and a half times that in Tamil Nadu —2947. This can perhaps be attributed to the fact that West Bengal has multiple unions at the

enterprise and industry level whereas the other two states favour a single union at that level On the other hand, West Bengal has fewer central unions than the other states.

A: MAHARASHTRA

The increasing militancy of the workers, following the legalist phase of the early 1960s described in the last chapter, was embodied in the rise of George Fernandes as the most prominent labour leader in Bombay, especially in the transport and service sectors The late 1960s were also a period of growth of technologically advanced industries, such as chemicals and petrochemicals, which were keen to promote company based unions This gave impetus to the rise of non-militant, professional, skilled unionists like Raja Kulkarni of INTUC The older industries, however, witnessed a resurgence of militancy under CITU The period 1967 72 saw the rise of the Maharashtrian chauvinist organisation, Shiv Sena, which at one time commanded a following in nearly 400 factories in Bombay Financed by industrialists, it engaged in violent strike-breaking and succeeded in its anti-communist mission by virtually destroying AITUC.[11]

The next wave to hit the city was that of Datta Samant, a doctor by profession, who entered the trade union field in the 1960s but shot to fame only in 1972 when he was invited by the workers of Godrej and Boyce to dislodge their union. He joined the Congress soon after and worked within INTUC, but opposed the government's policy during the Emergency of silencing labour protest, and spent much of the period in jail under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act. The period after the Emergency saw an outburst of labour protest all over the country and this was led in Bombay by Samant. According to estimates, Samant led more than 50% of the 140 strikes in the Bombay-Thane-Belapur belt between March 25 and December 31, 1977, being involved thus in a loss of 1 41 million persondays and Rs 665 4 million worth of production.[12] Samant's method lay in direct and uncompromising confrontations. He would usually put forward a direct lumpsum demand, and refuse to believe management claims about incapacity to pay. Instead, he would calculate profits and ability to pay with production figures obtained from the workers and base his demands upon these calculations. He echoed the workers's disgust with the legal system, and showed no qualms in ignoring court injunctions, or trampling on signed and concluded settlements.[13]

The popularity of Samant (and before him Mehta, see Chapter III 3) heralded the

growth of independent unionism as a trend in Bombay. Based on data for 1974-77, Vaidya[14] concludes that independent unions not affiliated to any central organisation or political party constituted between 65 to 70% of the total number of unions and between 40 and 40% of the total membership Next to the independent unions, INTUC claimed the biggest chunk of membership (14-15%) The Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (affiliated to the Hindu nationalist Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) showed a rise in membership over the four years from 7% to 13%, going from third to second rank in that period. The membership of AITUC declined in the same proportion — from 13% in 1974 to 8.7% in 1977. Ramaswamy[15] attributes the rise of independent unionism to the inability of established unions to respond to new challenges, and their tendency to put what appears to the workers to be unfounded faith in the cumbersome and increasingly inadequate settlement machinery, rather than to mount militant campaigns

The post-Emergency period also saw a rise in militancy by INTUC affiliated unions, because part of the reason for INTUC's strength is its ability to grasp the changing mood of the workers and respond appropriately The communist and left unions, on the other hand, have been slow to change with the times, and have consequently failed to attract the younger and more militant workers. While CITU has retained a steady but secondary following in the engineering, chemicals and woollen industries, AITUC has not really recovered from the Shiv Sena period [16]

There has also been a rise in leadership from among the ranks of the workers. Ramaswamy[17] cites a 1984 survey of 119 enterprises in Bombay that found that in 29 of them the leadership was entirely from within the work organisation. Vaidya[18] notes that by the end of the 1970s, half the presidents were outsiders and half were drawn from the ranks of the workers, whereas the general secretaries were more likely to be insiders than outsiders.

Enterprise or industry level unions are the norm in Bombay The membership of those unions which are deemed representative under the BIR Act is, by statute, confined to one area only The unions studied by Vaidya were all found to have formal hierarchies and decision-making structures, but in practice operational authority rested with the top leadership.[19] In the case of those unions affiliated to a central organisation, major policies were laid down by the federation All major demands and negotiations were handled at the central level, the branch only looked into local problems

In the independent unions, on the other hand, most decisions are taken by the office-

bearers and then presented to the executive for approval. Demands are formulated as a responses to the grievances and suggestions of workers Samant's unions, for instance, are marked by a strong personality cult. They tend to be quite loosely structured, with day-to-day affairs left to a local factory committee, often self-appointed rather than elected, while Samant himself remains inaccessible to workers wanting assistance over matters such as responding to a charge memo or attending a court case. Mehta's unions are far better organised His union office is well-equipped and run by staff who receive a good salary and benefits The members have to pay for services and the money is collected directly through the employers as part of the settlement However, Mehta, too, lacks a popular base, and is reported to have stated that "we consider ourselves the leaders of workers and are not going to be led by them" [20] The response of militant workers to this authoritarian structure has been to overthrow leaders or factory committees after a settlement has been reached While multiple unions at the plant or enterprise level competing for workers' loyalties is not the norm in Bombay, there is intense rivalry at the intra-union and factional level

B: TAMIL NADU

Ramaswamy[21] states that the most striking feature of the trade union situation in Madras is its extreme fragmentation. A number of labour federations and a few independent leaders without explicit union or political alignment are more or less at par, with no single one dominating, except perhaps CITU, which, too, he argues, is merely the first among equals. He ascribes this lack of a dominant force to the fact that there are few differences in method or objectives among the unions. All adhere to constitutional methods, collective bargaining, and political intervention to achieve a settlement.

A second reason Ramaswamy gives for this fragmentation, and one particularly significant for my purposes, is the politics of the state under the DMK and AIADMK. The parties, he notes, are indifferent to organised labour, and while they do have trade unions which extend faithful support to their policies, these policies rarely court industrial workers and thus have little popularity among them The party unions lack all independence and have isolated themselves from the other unions and never take a militant stand that might displease the party.

By the mid-1960s, the trade union structure was rapidly growing hierarchical, with few

elections being held The workers could not directly elect the leaders, but elected, instead, shop-floor representatives, who then elected the leaders The union leaders were autocratic — Gurumurthy (see Chapter III 3) was as much a "boss" as any manager — but also displayed a paternalistic concern in building up the unions The growing resentment against this manner of functioning and the rise of younger, better educated and skilled and confident workers, coincided with the emergence of the DMK as a political force, with its populist ideology. When Karunanidhi succeeded Annadurai as Chief Minister in 1968, he set about storming existing unions and replacing the leadership with DMK candidates Ramaswamy states that the trade union organisations of the Congress, CPI, CPI(M), and other parties were too much in awe of the DMK and too mindful of their respective party's relations with it to meet the threat posed to workers' interests by its policies [22]

While in Coimbatore, Thanjavur and Madurai, the DMK succeeded in setting up its own unions, Madras had a strong tradition of unions resisting division along party lines, and the consequence here, therefore, was the creation of factions within a single union. Thus, most major Madras unions have a DMK faction, an AIADMK one, a CITU one, and an INTUC one, besides some smaller ones, all of which have stable memberships and operate as well-organised pressure groups

The Madras union scene is intensely politicised. Union elections are held regularly and — since the advent of the DMK — through secret ballot, and are fought out with fervour. Unlike in Bombay where workers seek out leaders to represent them, in Madras, leaders put themselves up for election. While core party supporters may vote for their leader, the rest of the union members tend to vote, regardless of their party preferences in the state or national elections, for the candidate they think would best represent their work interests, and was not corrupt or co-opted by the management. Since DMK or AIADMK candidates were often viewed as corrupt and management stooges when their party was in power, political support for these parties did not necessarily translate into the victory of that party's faction in the union The CITU leadership, on the other hand, was always assured of support from CPM voters

In the turmoil created by the violent entry of the DMK into the trade union field, few strong independent leaders were able to emerge. Ramaswamy profiles the few that did succeed. Kuchelan, an independent expelled from CITU for not conforming to its discipline,

began to use methods more or less similar to the DMK's He captured the Simpsons' union in 1972 and introduced direct elections to the top offices which, being a long-standing demand of the workers, caught on like wild fire all over the city With much of the city's industry under his control, Kuchelan made aggressive demands on employers and backed them up with confrontations, often violent. He scoffed at arguments about inability to pay, drove hard bargains, and began to be called the Samant of Madras Like Samant, his methods were autocratic. Detention during the Emergency affected him adversely, however, and he earned a reputation for being corrupt and a management stooge. It also became obvious that most of his agreements had contained hidden productivity clauses which he had signed with the employers without informing the workers By the early 1980s, Kuchelan was more or less a bygone. No other leader has risen to take his place, although Ramaswamy does mention V.P.Chintan, a protege of Kuchelan's, who, in contrast, functions democratically, consults workers at every stage, and is believed to be incorruptible However, Chintan has failed to acquire the commanding position that Kuchelan had, partly due to poor strategy Another leader, whom Ramaswamy cites as gaining popularity, is Fenn Walter, an advocate with Marxist leanings who operates independently. He is in command of Dunlop, one of the largest enterprises in the state, and several smaller establishments His methods are militant and he scorns other trade unionists, the judiciary and government bodies, and calls for the building of a class consciousness to replace the economism he believes characterises the present-day trade union movement.[23]

In addition to the failure of one or two leaders to dominate the field, Madras is characterised by a frequent change in leadership, which overshadows even Bombay. This is due to the factional nature of union politics but also due to its continuing inability to achieve democratisation beyond the mechanisms of annual elections. Major settlements continue to be signed without the sanction of members, and overthrow of union leaders does not mean the overthrow of settlements arrived at under them, so that leadership changes do not threaten the management as they do in Bombay Yet workers remain dependent on outside leaders, partly because of the superior education and bargaining skills they offer, but partly because an outside leader can forge unity between rival factions and function relatively independently of any of them.[24]

C: WEST BENGAL

Unlike Bombay and Madras, Calcutta is characterised by the presence of multiple factory-level unions competing for the workers' loyalty. While many of those at the factory and industry levels are affiliated to the major central trade union federations, others are organised and run by individual leaders independent of party connections, often lawyers by profession. This multiplicity of unions and political affiliations has been attributed to the presence of a large number of electorally significant parties — all the parties that make up the Left Front as well as the various Congress offshoots. The West Bengal Labour Department reported in 1973 that, among 635 industrial units surveyed, there were 1770 unions, i.e., 3 unions per unit on average, with the range varying from 2 to 42 unions in a single unit.[25] However, as in Bombay and even Madras, unions more often compete for the same set of members than turn to hitherto unorganised workers. This has had the consequence that, given the levelling off in the number of workers and the increase in the number of unions, average union membership has been showing signs of decline. A trade union leader was moved to admit that even in Calcutta 60% of the workers remained unorganised.[26]

There were 10 central trade unions in West Bengal in 1985, but, since the coming to power of the Left Front government in 1977, CITU has effectively come to dominate the trade union movement in West Bengal. At the national level, too, its strength is largely derived from its position in West Bengal; of the 19 office bearers of the national CITU, 9 were from West Bengal, and of its 271 General Council members, 120 were from West Bengal.[27]

CITU accepts that the party is supreme and that the union must function under overall party direction and control. There is a close interlocking of union and party positions, with key union offices in the hands of party stalwarts. CITU is also a cadre-based union with a strong core of politically committed members, few of whom, however, are actually members of CPI(M), which has fairly exclusive admission procedures. The union conducts regular programmes for the education of its members. The structure of CITU unions is quite hierarchical and all major decisions are taken at the highest levels rather than at the level of the factory committee.[28]

The increasingly "moderate" role being played by CITU has alienated workers in many cases, and has redounded to the credit of INTUC, which is now taking a more militant stand. Nonetheless, the trade union situation in West Bengal remains party dominated and quiescent,

with none of the constant change of leadership characteristic of Madras and Bombay, nor the rise of independent firebrand unionists like Samant or Kuchelan, or worker leaders like Rajan Nair.[29]

3: DISPUTES

Since the category of disputes in the available data (see Table 13) includes strikes and lock-outs, it is impossible to get a sense of their relative proportion. Since information on the causes of the disputes, too, is not available, one can only use the category broadly to indicate tension and distrust between workers and employers. I will place greater reliance therefore on actual cases of disputes where they have been reported upon.

A: MAHARASHTRA

Looking at figures for the number of disputes, workers involved and persondays lost, certain dramatic trends can be discerned. (i) The number of disputes has declined steadily since 1982-83 to its lowest levels in 20 years in 1985 (211) and 1986 (224), from 540 in 1965 and 742 in 1966. (ii) The incidence of disputes peaked in the years preceding the Emergency (717 in 1971 and 881 in 1972), declined significantly during the Emergency (350 in 1976) and rose again in 1977 immediately after the Emergency (541). The incidence of disputes, however, is in itself not an adequately revealing figure. The number of workers involved and the number of persondays lost (from which one can deduce duration) are more so. For instance, while the number of disputes went down from 540 in 1965 to 211 in 1985, and the number of workers involved, from 192,329 to 54,639 over the same period, the number of persondays lost increased from 904,624 in 1965 to 4,413,187 in 1985. Similarly, even though the number of disputes and workers involved were far more in 1977, 1978, 1979 and 1981 than in 1985 and 1986, the number of persondays lost in the latter period approximated the figures reached in the former period. This can be explained by the fact that the disputes in the 1980s were of much longer duration. I will now go on to describe some instances of disputes which will prove illustrative of the variables identified in this study.

Textile Strike:[30] The strike began in 7 cotton textile mills in Bombay on October 21,

1981 and turned industry-wide, involving the rest of the city's 60 mills on January 18, 1982. It is officially deemed to have ended on August 2, 1983, although the union that led the strike never formally called it off It is reported to have involved some 250,000 workers, and was the longest in India's labour history [31]

The nature of the cotton textile industry has already been detailed in Chapter III.2. It will suffice to recapitulate here that the industry was losing its relative importance in the national and world market and was going through a process of structural differentiation, whereby many of the smaller firms were declaring "sickness" and closing down whereas others were modernising and flourishing, so that the industry was being controlled by an ever smaller number of owners The industry saw an increase in the number of automatic looms during 1977-80, a combination of jobs and abolition of certain job categories, and thus a reduction in labour employed of 16 3% between 1960 and 1980, i e., about 25,000 workers, even though the mills now worked for seven days a week unlike in 1961. The introduction of automated machinery leading to new forms of work organisation had resulted in tighter control and supervision over every move of the workers and more speed was required from them.[32]

Although these changes had reduced the number of workers while increasing production and thus profit, there had been hardly any change in the conditions of the workers since Independence. The basic wage rate had not changed in 20 years. Due to the way wage deals had been worked out, a number of workers still earned piece rates, and some of the older workers actually suffered an erosion in their purchasing power over the years. Textile wages relative to wages in the chemical, pharmaceutical and engineering industries fell from 120.2 in 1962 to 99 3 in 1975. The monthly expenditure of an average textile worker exceeded his/her disposable income by 50% in 1975 and nearly 80% of workers were in debt. Leave and housing privileges were also far below those in other industries. All these terms applied only to permanent workers, whereas 40% of the workers in the industry were replacement workers, for whom insecurity of employment was a major concern. Their wages were half those earned by permanent workers Although 45% of them had been working for over 2 years, none had been made permanent Work conditions in the mills were deplorable, leading to a high incidence of hearing loss and bronchial problems among long-term workers. The accident rate in the industry increased by 77% between 1974-75 and 1978-79, and absenteeism was correspondingly high, reaching 20% in December 1978.[33]

As seen in Chapter III 3, Bombay textile workers had a strong tradition of militancy The communist GKU, dominant among the Bombay textile workers by the late 1920s, had been replaced by the Congress created RMMS in 1945, which later became affiliated to INTUC Under the BIR Act of 1946 the RMMS was recognised as the representative union for the Bombay textile industry, and all subsequent attempts to challenge its representative status were defeated by the Industrial Court The RMMS had made very few demands for wage increases and had been willing to sign huge productivity agreements for the modest wage increases it had obtained Further, it never fully understood, or cared to understand, the industry-wide implications of modernisation, and dealt with each specific measure of modernisation in each mill as an isolated case, without any comprehensive policy [34]

The strike began when the Diwali bonus deal between the RMMS and the millowners' association was announced. Workers in 22 mills started agitating, RMMS activists were attacked While some workers went back to work, 7 mills remained on strike, and workers from one of these mills invited Datta Samant to lead them An indefinite and industry wide strike was launched on January 18, 1982 Samant's initial demands were for wage and bonus conditions to be more closely related to the productivity of the firm, permanent status for replacement workers, and leave travel and house rent allowances He formed his own union — the Mumbai Girni Kamgar Union (MGKU) — but did not bother with claiming recognition for it because of his contempt for legalism. The non-INTUC unions joined the initial phase of the struggle under the aegis of the Trade Union Joint Action Committee (TUJAC). At the national level, an all-India strike was called and supported by 8 central trade unions, except INTUC.[35]

Three major "jail bharo" (fill the jails) campaigns were organised by Samant between August and October 1982, and enthusiastically taken up by the workers and their supporters Barring a few incidents of excessive militancy, such as an attempted attack by 1000 strikers on a police station, which was dispersed by a lathi charge, the strike remained remarkably disciplined, given its duration. College and school teachers, as well as the clerical, technical and supervisory staff of the mills went on sympathy strikes Various sections of the public also rallied around to make financial contributions to the workers [36] By August 1982, about 100,000 workers had left the city and returned to their villages, where some became involved in mobilising support for their cause among the peasants, led by the Lal Nishan Party In the

process, they also raised issues such as land and minimum wages for agricultural labourers, and corruption in kulak-controlled sugar factories.[37]

The Bombay cotton textile millowners, traditionally among the best organised and influential in the country, rejected the initial demands outright Century Mills drove its workers out of the mill quarters in the middle of the night with the help of the police. Along with the RMMS they organised a "mill bharo" (fill the mills), with police protection for strike breakers or new workers Much of the millowners' unwillingness to make any concessions at all stemmed from the fear that this would redound to Samant's credit and allow him to become entrenched in the industry His reputation was such that employers feared they would lose all control over the bargaining process [38] The Secretary of the Bombay Mill Owners' Association (BMOA) stated that the central government did not wish the millowners to give in as it would have repercussions for the 106 government-owned National Textile Corporation (NTC) mills across the country, which would then be forced to raise their wages.[39]

The Chief Minister of Maharashtra declared the strike illegal on the grounds that it was not supported by the recognised union, RMMS. He therefore also refused to refer the strike to adjudication, arguing that it would serve no useful purpose.[40] Section 144 of the Indian Penal Code was declared on 3 February 1982, which prevented the assembly of more than four people at a time This was subverted by a massive "jail bharo" by Samant who himself was arrested under the Section and imprisoned for 14 days. The workers also responded by forming independent committees in their residential areas, which provoked police harassment in working class neighbourhoods, with random house arrests, house searches and the detention and torture of activists [41] When the municipal government employees, and engineering, pharmaceutical and chemical workers went on a sympathy strike, the government called in 20 companies of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) in addition to 22,000 city police.[42] The government responded to the mobilisation of peasants and agricultural workers by using the well-established rural networks of the Congress — the richer peasants, landlords, sarpanches, and local police — to persuade and bully workers to return to the mills.[43]

As the strike went on, the workers became steadily pauperised. The total loss of wages for the period was close to Rs 901.5 million. By mid-1983, 57 of the mills had opened. The BMOA issued a directive to the mills telling them not to rehire workers who reported to unions other than the RMMS [44] Workers found that conditions in the mills had worsened. Skill

distinctions had broken down; work intensity had increased; those who were demoted got no compensation; and management began to rotate workers on the shopfloor to prevent communication

On the eve of the strike, the total number of workers on the rolls of the mills had been 232,000, including 80,000 casual workers Nearly five years later, in October 1986, there were 156,000 on the rolls — a reduction of 33% in the textile workforce of the city The report of the Kotwal Committee established to look into the effects of the strike on the workers, provides a break-up of strike-affected workers as follows 8,929 retired during the strike, 42,970 resigned, 51,814 were either dismissed or discharged, and 2,634 died during the strike. The total comes to 106,000, or nearly 46% of the pre strike workforce The difference between this figure and the figure of 33% cited above is accounted for by fresh recruitment during and after the strike of nearly 25,000 new mill hands, clear proof that militant workers had been laid off and more malleable ones installed in their place [45]

It has been argued that the length and intensity of the strike presented an opportunity to the millowners to trim their workforce at a faster pace and at less cost than would otherwise have been possible.[46] The strike was also initially useful for the millowners as it allowed them to get rid of stockpiles in a period of recession [47] Ultimately, however, even the millowners must have experienced some of the consequences of the Rs 9,855 1 million loss in production and the loss of 563,150 persondays. No doubt, some of this loss was compensated for by the Rs 47.6 million in provident funds and Rs 334.7 million in legal dues that are still owed to the workers by the mills.[48]

While Samant called for the government to take over all the mills and hand them over to the workers to be run as cooperatives, and even the Chief Minister and the RMMS wanted this for the twelve sick mills that had closed down during the strike, the millowners resisted this move. They called instead for government measures to tone up the entire industry, such as reduction in excise duties, and provision of financial assistance at concessional rates for modernisation This has been viewed by some as an attempt on the part of the millowners to put sickness to use to win further concessions for the rest of the industry [49] In 1991, in response to these demands, the government introduced Development Control Regulations, which allow both sick and healthy mills in the textile area to sell land for commercial and residential purposes The regulations contain no provisions to make benefits of the sales

conditional on compensation or rehabilitation of workers, or to make it mandatory for workers' dues to be cleared first from the proceeds of the land sale.[50]

The period of the strike also saw the tightening of state controls over the labour movement. In June 1982, two bills were passed to amend the Trade Union Act of 1926 and the Payment of Wages Act. The latter legitimised the check-off of union dues, which could potentially increase union strength, but also lead to collusion between employers and corrupt union leaders. By the Settlement of Dispute Bill, employees in hospitals, educational institutions, service and village industries were required to acquiesce to binding arbitration to resolve any conflict. After the police strike, the government declared that policemen would have no trade union rights. Bhattacharjee argues that the strike was crucial for the Indian state in its attempts to attract foreign capital with the promise of a disciplined workforce.[51]

The strike did, however, lead to the mounting of a challenge to the ruling Congress party. A Lal Nishan Party candidate backed by the Workers Front and various left parties stood against Vasantdada Patil, the Chief Minister, in his home constituency of Sangli and, despite strenuous efforts on the latter's part, won 15,000 votes to his 53,000.[52] Similarly, Samant, who had formed the Kamgar Aghadi (Workers' Front) party during the strike, was elected to Parliament from the mill area in 1985.[53]

Although the strike was defeated conclusively, with no concessions or compensation having been won by the workers, it did have some positive consequences for unionisation. Despite the fact that the RMMS remained the legally recognised union, it suffered a major drop in membership, thus breaking the existing pattern of Congress-incorporated unionism, while the MGKU continued to attract large crowds to its rallies. The strike also saw the forging of a new unity between rural and urban workers and peasants.[54] More recently, an active group of workers from the closed mills formed a committee and undertook a hunger strike to call attention to the continuing plight of displaced workers. They also organised a national conference of textile workers to look into problems of the textile industry and frame alternatives to the government's textile policy.[55]

Strikes in Pune: The next two disputes are set in Pune, where the workforce has certain unique features. The Pune workforce is largely young, educated and skilled, and Marathi speaking. Iyer has noted that the fact of being better educated, younger, culturally or

linguistically homogenous, doing jobs which require knowledge, perception, and use of discretion — which result in a more self-confident and assertive workforce — have caused the Pune workers to be more militant and better organised. Contributing to this is the long tradition of trade unionism among the municipal workers, teachers and government staff of Pune. In addition, since the new workers coming to Pune in the 1960s had to find homes in the outskirts of the city, the suburban districts grew into working class areas. The social integration of workers of different wage and skill categories gave rise to strong traditions of solidarity and class sentiment, relatively unbroken by trade union rivalries, political factionalisation, and caste and language conflicts. Sympathy strikes and joint action committees across enterprises became the norm, their impact reinforced in the city by the fact that the 175,000 to 200,000 industrial workers and their families constituted in 1989 about 45-50% of Pune's population [56]

Ramaswamy[57] describes the case of Philips, a Dutch multinational. Philips had two plants in Pune, the centre of its operations. One produced electronics components and plastic and metalware products, and employed 22,300 workers. The second produced radio and audio sets and medical electronics, and employed 1,100 workers. The Philips Workers' Union (PWU), formed in 1962 and formally recognised in 1969, operated in both plants. It was among the strongest internal unions in the country, and had remained independent of any central federation throughout its history.

The union became a major force in 1970 when Hadke and Tatooskar, two employees, were elected President and Vice-President. The Pune units soon developed a tradition of managing industrial relations through conflict and confrontation. The style of the management was to stretch the union to the utmost before conceding even the most reasonable demands. The union, too, would come up with inflated demands so that it could settle eventually at more reasonable levels, and backed up every demand with the threat of direct action. The management soon found itself in the weaker position, with Hadke refusing to back down, and having the support of the workers not to do so. Things became even more difficult for the management when all the unions in the various Philips plants across the country formed a federation. Hadke also built up support in the villages surrounding one of the plants from where it drew a quarter of its workforce. The management was increasingly nervous of Hadke's power, and used the Emergency to dismiss him on grounds of having slapped a

supplier However, the disturbances that followed this incident forced it to refer the issue to arbitration, the outcome of which was that it was required to re-employ Hadke. However, it continued to look for other ways to neutralise Hadke, and found it in the charge that the units which he led were showing declining discipline and productivity. It proceeded to cut the wages of the workers and to retrench those on the tape-recorder belt. The union resisted these moves with a go-slow, which made it impossible for the management to achieve production targets. The dismissal of activists failed to have any effect on the workers. Instead, the union submitted a charter demanding a new wage agreement After ignoring the charter for a while, the management was forced to yield to the pressure of the go-slow and come to the negotiating table It refused, however, to concede any further benefits to workers unless they could be linked to productivity, which the union refused to accept By early 1981, when it was obvious that no agreement could be arrived at, the union went on another go-slow, and the company responded by threatening to lay off the entire labour force. The union then added rallies and protest marches to the go-slow. Finally, in April, the management declared a lock-out in both factories.

The lock-out lasted 81 days, throughout which the union kept up the pressure with meetings, protest rallies, and demonstrations before government offices and offices of company executives. The union claimed that the lock-out was illegal since the statutory two-week notice had not been given, and demanded wages for the whole period. Eventually, it was the management which gave in, offering 80% of the wages for the lock-out period and some other benefits asked for in the charter. While it had demanded in return a commitment on productivity based on production norms arrived at through work study, the union instead agreed only to commit workers to maintain the highest levels they had actually achieved.

Barely six months after this agreement was arrived at, the union made a demand for an education allowance The management was unwilling to consider this demand without some productivity commitment on the part of the union Meanwhile, however, there had been some changes both in the management and the union A new team of managers determined to take a tough stand had taken over the personnel function. The union, too, had been developing cracks. Hadke had begun to behave in an increasingly autocratic manner and, with his henchmen, engaged in acts of violence More than two months after one such incident, Hadke and four other union leaders were summarily dismissed from the service of the company. No

reasons were given or any enquiry held. The management followed this up with a blitz of publicity against the union. The local newspapers took up this campaign with front-page headlines that portrayed the union in a negative light

This time the dismissal of Hadke did not elicit as strong a response from the workers A month after the dismissals, the management clamped a lock-out on both plants and demanded that each worker undertake to work normally By 1984, Hadke was effectively sidelined Although he was still union president, he was debarred from signing an agreement by the union's constitution as an outsider

Meanwhile, a rival union, the Philips Kamgar Sanghatana, which had been formed during an earlier agitation, was beginning to gain strength Both unions served notices terminating the old settlement and putting forth a new charter of demands While the demands of the old union were ignored, the management soon clinched a new settlement with the newer union. In the settlement it was claimed, that the new union which signed it had "substantial support", but not the majority It did not even need a majority as it was signed under section 18(1) of the Industrial Disputes Act, under which the benefits of the agreement extend only to those who belong to the union. The benefits arrived at were fairly generous, and could be applied retroactively to anyone willing to sign the agreement within the next six weeks More than 1000 workers immediately lined up to sign the agreement Thus, as Ramaswamy concludes, "far from reflecting the will of the majority, the settlement itself became the instrument for winning over the majority to the new union with the lure of the benefits."[58] A key aspect of the settlement was that it contained a commitment to productivity norms, which would never have been agreed to by Hadke.

Ramaswamy draws two major lessons from the Philips experience Firstly, the managers were less willing to tolerate a strong internal union like Hadke's This was because, while Mehta and Samant, who also commanded strong unions and used militant tactics, were willing to strike bargains that conceded significant management demands, Hadke was not He was completely unrelenting on productivity increases through revised work norms, lowered manning levels, and introduction of voluntary retirement, while continuing to demand high benefits. Secondly, the power of an employee leader is likely to be more irksome than that of an outsider. But the employee leader is also easier to neutralise -- he (or she, but it is usually a man) can simply be fired, and this would weaken him considerably [59]

Telco Another interesting dispute was that at Telco at Pune.[60] A vast engineering firm, it employs some 8,500 blue-collar workers and some 5-6000 white collar, supervisory workers and officers and engineers The dispute at Telco in 1989 shared many of the features of the struggles described above. It had its roots in struggles around the production process. The management had consistently retained for itself total control in matters of deployment and work standards, all of which were becoming increasingly unbearable for the workers as productivity norms were raised without any technological upgradation.

The leadership of the internal union, the Telco Kamgar Sanghatana (TKS), was not sensitive to these changes and to the growing discontent of the workers and, consequently, was replaced by a more militant leadership in 1976 Although this new leadership, too, fell out of favour with the workers, there emerged from it a worker, Rajan Nair, who took a more militant stand and was adopted by the workers as their leader.

I shall not go into the details of the dispute here except to note that the management acted similar to managements in the cases described above. The act that sparked off the dispute was its dismissal of the vice-president of the union in May 1988; as the dispute proceeded, other activists were suspended or dismissed. In February 1989, the Telco Employees Union (TEU) was formed, with which the company was willing to negotiate, even though it had earlier claimed that it could not negotiate with the TKS because the wage dispute was under adjudication. In September of the same year, while the matter was still under adjudication, the company signed a wage settlement with the TEU.

The Telco dispute is interesting for the role played by the government, apart from the ubiquitous and predictable use of police force and sections of the Criminal Procedure Code, first to arrest Nair, and then to beat up and arrest some 4000 hunger strikers. At an earlier stage, after the management had fired the vice-president and he had been reinstated in the union as an honourary member, the management had declared its unwillingness to deal with a committee containing outsiders At this point, the state government, of its own accord, referred the issue of wage revision for adjudication Normal practice is for one of the parties to the dispute to approach a conciliation officer, and only on failure of his or her attempts at reconciliation is the matter sent for adjudication. It is only in extraordinary circumstances that the government is supposed to initiate the process, and there was nothing to indicate that the dispute so far had been extraordinary The government's intervention allowed the management

to declare that, since the matter was up for adjudication, it would not negotiate with the new committee.

The Telco case is one in which the political importance of the workers can be seen The elections were approaching, and the Congress (I) was beleaguered It could certainly not afford to alienate over 400,000 working class members and their sympathisers Besides, Pune was the chief minister's constituency. Almost all the unions that comprised the Trade Union Council (TUC), formed to support the Telco strike, had given a call to vote against the Congress (I), and the TUC was being pressured by them to make a similar statement soon The chief minister called in leaders of the TKS for meetings They were led to believe that the Telco dispute would be solved by November 20 In exchange, suggestions were made that they might ask the TUC to issue a statement supporting the Congress (I). Between November 10 and 20, daily meetings are reported to have been held between the chief minister and TKS leaders, and between the company and the chief minister Tripartite meetings were never held The TUC decided, in order to protect TKS interests, not to give a call against the Congress (I), but it could not, given the anti-Congress (I) sentiments of the workers at that time, call on them to support the Congress (I) either It therefore made no statement on the elections, nor for that matter, did the TKS.

The daily meetings between the chief minister and TKS leaders were not leading anywhere, and the leaders were becoming cynical. By November 21, the chief minister is reported to have told them that since everything was virtually settled and the only thing that remained was a tripartite meeting and formal settlement, the TKS should wait until after the elections. This worried the TKS which felt that, if the matter was put off until after the elections, it would languish unsolved. Yet, on November 22, when the workers assembled at the company, it was resolved that they would unilaterally and unconditionally withdraw the strike. The origins of this decision are unclear, Iyer suggests that the decision was too well organised to be spontaneous, and suspects that it was the outcome of an understanding between Rajan Nair and the company She adduces as evidence for this the fact that the management subjected workers to no further victimisation on resumption of their work, and went out of its way to maintain normalcy on the shopfloor In addition, it adopted a conciliatory tone with workers in its attempts to get them to consent to the agreement arrived at with the TEU and to wean them from the TKS.

Beedi Workers In contrast to the eagerness with which the Telco workers case was taken up by the chief minister and other government leaders, there is the official indifference accorded to the struggles of the beedi (leaf cigarette) workers [61] In 1980, 40,000 beedi workers had been on strike in Bombay for 43 days It took 32 days, several memoranda, morchas (demonstrations) and visits to the Mantralaya (Secretariat) to stir the government out of its indifference Finally, meetings were arranged in which all parties to the dispute took part the Industry Minister, the Minister of State for Labour, beedi workers and owners, tendu leaf traders, union representatives, and the assistant labour commissioner and his sixteen factory inspectors

The political insignificance of the beedi industry is explained by some of its features. Most of the beedi workers are women, working at home, and mostly uneducated. They are required to buy part of the raw material, the tendu leaves and the thread, out of their own wages, at the retail market rate The wage is fixed according to the beedis rolled, usually thousands per day Both the beedi workers and the men who buy their beedis are scattered all over the city While the buyers are required to keep registers of all transactions including the name and number of all workers to whom work is given out, women who had been working for 25 years for the same owner said their names had never been entered in a register. Neither had the women been issued the mandatory wage or identity cards. Factory inspectors never visited the homes where the work was done, and were unable to provide details as to the total number of workers, owners or tendu traders in the whole business. The minimum wage of some Rs. 2 a day had never been implemented, the reason, besides sheer negligence, being the argument that since the workers were mostly women, this was only a supplementary wage for them. The workers had been unionised since 1950 but, given the fact of their working at home in scattered locations, organisation was not easy. Little wonder, given these conditions, that little was done to appease the striking workers In the first meeting, the Labour Minister agreed in principle that the beedi owners should supply the leaves and the wage rate should be worked out after that, this being the union's minimum bargaining position At the second meeting, the issue of the leaves was completely sidetracked while the minister pursued the question of the minimum wage. The beedi owners finally agreed to pay a somewhat higher wage but did not agree to supply the leaves, and the minister did not insist. The minister also

made some appeals to the tendu leaf traders, who are said to benefit from near monopolistic conditions, to bring down their prices, but with little success The union leaders finally walked out in disgust

Instances of police and management collusion abound. Pendse[62] describes an incident in 1980 at Taloja, an industrial township on the Pune-Thane road. The area was one of low wages, unenforced labour laws, and a large proportion of temporary and casual workers The workers were largely from the villages in the area The management, largely outsiders, determined that the "pampered" labour conditions of Bombay should not be recreated here The management was known to have established close links with the police and the administration which were more visible than in Bombay, and to have propitiated all the important local political entities, most of whom were beholden to them for largesse during election campaigns.

Claims for higher wages and better conditions by the workers of Pramod Rubber Industries, an enterprise that employed some 56 permanent workers and 15-17 temporary workers in the manufacture of tyre tubes for cycles and rickshaws, led to a go-slow and then strike on the part of the workers and the declaration of a lock-out by the owners When the workers gathered to protest the use of strike-breakers, one of the owners of the factory drove by the gathered workers and began to fire on them from within his car. One worker was injured, another died on the spot. The firing continued from inside the factory gates, and was compounded by the throwing of soda bottles. The workers, a large number of whom had gathered at the gates at the news of the worker's death, retaliated with stones Section 144 was immediately declared, which prohibited more than four people from assembling, the workers were enraged and defied it Later in the day a fire was started in the factory, which the workers attribute to the hired toughs who were hurling the missiles from within The police arrived later and undertook a lathi charge and firing to clear the workers, killing one.

Bakshi[63] describes a similar incident five years later in a very different industry The National Rayon Company (NRC) was one of the biggest industrial units in the country, located in Ambivili, an industrial estate in the Bombay Kalyan belt It employed some 10,000 workers, 6,500 of them permanent, 2000 contract, and 1500 supervisory At the time of the incident being described, the union was under the leadership of Datta Samant Following a

dispute arising from his putting forward a demand for increased bonus, the union was banned from holding meetings in the vicinity of the mill

On January 26, 1985, the management called off a long planned Republic Day celebration at the school in the NRC compound. The angry workers held a meeting outside the compound, which was addressed by a representative of Samant's. Shortly after the representative began his speech, a senior police inspector walked up to him and told him at gun point to get into the police van, allegedly for violating Section 144 which had been in force in the area for over a year The enraged workers then began to demand that they all be arrested. The police claim that they began to throw stones, and that they were forced to fire in self-defence The workers maintain, and eye witnesses corroborate, that the shower of stones came from within the factory Two men and a woman were killed in the firing and 28 others injured The police did not stop at dispersing the crowd After the people had fled into the compound or into neighbouring villages, the police are reported to have gone after them and assaulted many workers

The attitude of the police is best summed up in the words of a Bombay Labour Union (BLU) organiser in the Tarapur industrial estate·

> The police are ever ready to implement court orders, whether real or imaginary, when they are in favour of managements ...But when the order is in our favour, it is a different story. We obtained an order from the Thane Industrial Court...in a complaint of illegal lockout restraining the management from employing contract labour....Later, when we found the company working with the aid of contract workmen, we rushed to the police station with the order only to be told that we should address the court with our complaints.[64]

B: TAMIL NADU

The dispute figures for Tamil Nadu are hard to interpret. A few interesting points about them can, however, be made (i) There has been a more or less steady increase in the number of disputes, number of workers involved, and number of persondays lost between 1965 and 1986 (in contrast to Maharashtra) (ii) Like in Maharashtra, there was a dramatic increase in the number of disputes in the years preceding the Emergency, followed by a decline in the Emergency years, and a rise again in the post-Emergency period (iii) There seems to be some correlation between the coming to power of Karunanidhi in 1968 and the quite dramatic rise

in the number of disputes from 137 in 1967, with 94,715 workers involved and 478,367 persondays lost, to 264 in 1968 with 160,935 workers involved and 2,381,917 persondays lost Similarly, the increase in disputes in 1977 could be attributed to the coming to power of the AIADMK government as well as to the end of the Emergency. This tendency seems to have climaxed in 1979, which shows the highest number of workers involved — 294,116 — and persondays lost — 8,405,305 — for the entire period, and the second highest number of disputes — 342.

Simpson One of the most interesting cases of dispute is that of Simpson Ramaswamy writes that "Simpson has been so much in the eye of the industrial relations storm, and so intimately connected with the making and unmaking of union leaders, that it is difficult to see the contemporary trade union history of Madras apart from it"[105] The Simpson group comprised about thirty companies, employing some 15,000 workers, and producing tractors, diesel engines, pistons, wheel rims, chemicals, paints, tea, books, and newspapers The major thrust was toward engineering geared to the automobile industry The group was closely held together by the founder's family and bore the stamp of family management Most of the companies in the group are in the midst of severe competition, although some did have a good share of the market. While wages in some companies, such as the engineering units, were good, in others like the automobile industry they lagged behind the best, like TVS and Ashok Leyland. A large number of the employees, some 4000 of them, were casual employees.

The Simpson and Group Workers and Staff Union (SWSU) was formed in the 1950s and included both blue-collar and clerical workers. The early period was one of discipline, with the founder of the union, Gurumurthy, having considerable clout both with the workers and with the ruling Congress party Recognising this, the management established peace with the union and conceded many benefits

As seen earlier, the rise of the DMK in the late 1960s attracted younger leaders to it Meanwhile, disgruntlement with Gurumurthy had also caused workers to seek out Ramanujan of INTUC to form a rival union The 1960s saw a number of conflicts between Gurumurthy's followers and Ramanujan's With the coming to power of Karunanidhi in 1968, he set up a DMK union at Simpson, to which the INTUC union was annexed

The events that followed are significant for their illustration of the nature of DMK

intervention on the labour front Against a bonus demand of Rs 11 million made by the union, the management had offered Rs 7 million The chief minister suggested that the union accept Rs 5 million as interim payment and leave the final settlement to him. Gurumurthy refused, and his followers went on strike The DMK union accepted the suggestion and insisted on continuing to work Gurumurthy's followers were intimidated, beaten with cycle chains and forced to shout slogans demanding the resignation of their president. The police and the management turned a blind eye to the goings-on. Gurumurthy was forced to resign and within a few days a DMK man from Coimbatore was installed as president of the SWSU, his cronies appointed as office bearers, and the DMK union disbanded

The DMK man, Gopal, proceeded to sign an agreement with the management that gave the workers additional benefits amounting to Rs. 50 per month During the strike against the interim bonus settlement imposed by the chief minister, Gurumurthy had filed a case claiming wages for the duration of the strike Gopal withdrew this claim and, in addition, offered to compensate the loss in production This outraged the workers so much that another spate of violence ensued DMK men let loose terror to force the other workers to abide by the settlement. The workers refused and stopped coming to work. They were willing to return to work only on the condition that Gopal be dismissed. Finally, under much pressure from the opposition parties, Karunanidhi was forced to ask Gopal to quit and the Labour Commissioner to hold union elections.

The election of Kuchelan as president and Chintan as vice-president did not bring an end to the violence and dissension in the SWSU. DMK men left the SWSU, re-formed their own union, and continued with the violence. Even after the calm enforced by the Emergency and the dismissal of Karunanidhi, factionalism and swings in leadership caused by the DMK faction switching its alliances, continued

The workers went on strike in November 1983 against the advice of Kuchelan, then president, demanding parity of benefits with other large engineering units, such as Ashok Leyland and TVS, and reinstatement of 14 workers who had been dismissed in 1983 for their involvement in factional fighting over production norms The labour minister and the chief minister appealed to the workers to return to work, but only about 200 of Gurumurthy's supporters and a handful of AIADMK supporters responded. The government then stepped in to make selective arrests and provide security to the strike-breakers. This did not weaken

the workers either. By February 1984, the government offered to appoint a special tribunal to adjudicate the dispute, but this too was rejected as the workers wanted a negotiated settlement before they returned. Finally, the chief minister himself offered to arbitrate over the dispute. He gave himself two months to decide on the dismissals and three months for the other issues, and asked the workers to return to work immediately. This brought the two-month long strike to an end. In fact, little was won. One of the units never reopened, and the chief minister's offer turned out to be merely a ruse. Months passed by without a word from him. More than a year after the strike some of the units came to a negotiated settlement, with some increase in benefits. The management refused to take back the dismissed workers, however, and their cases were transferred for adjudication to the labour court instead of the promised arbitration by the chief minister.

The situation in Simpson continued to be one of factional divisions. The management had emerged triumphant, and Ramaswamy concludes that this can only partly be ascribed to the politics of the government. Rather, factional disputes within the union, which allowed the workers to be divided, were equally responsible.

TI Group: Ramaswamy[66] provides another instance of a management emerging triumphant. The TI group refused to operate its cycle factory, on the grounds that it could not compete with other manufacturers unless labour agreed to revised work norms. When the government restrained the firm from closing down, the company took the matter to the Supreme Court and obtained a judgement in its favour. After prolonged closure, the factory opened with the workers having to accept all the management's conditions.

TVS: The triumph of management was revealed again in 1991 when the TVS management sought and won an injunction from the High Court prohibiting the exhibition of a documentary film on the struggles of their workers against what the latter called "feudal management ways". The film described the various forms of struggle which had been going on since 1987, the victimisation of nearly a thousand workers during this time, and the management's refusal to let them join the union of their choice. The TVS group is one of the largest industrial conglomerates in South India, with an annual turnover of about Rs 900 million.[67]

English Electric. A case that is interesting for its contrasts with the Simpson case is that of English Electric, a multinational company producing switchgear, marconi instruments and other electronic instruments The company was among the best payers in Madras, and working conditions were generally good. The union, formed in 1961, went through similar phases of unionisation in terms of a shift to the DMK in the 1960s, and to Kuchelan in the 1970s What is remarkable is that while the workers were politically divided — by the mid-seventies there existed two factions within the union, the DMK and the AIADMK — they were united as far as union affairs were concerned, and supported the AITUC leader, Ramaswamy, for a long time Being highly conscious and having a well developed internal leadership, they turned to outside leaders less in order to win benefits from management than to maintain political links in a situation where these are necessary The frequent shifts in leadership ensured that no leader developed links with the management.[68]

B & C The case of the Buckingham and Carnatic (Binny) Company bears some resonance with that of the textile mills in Bombay. As seen in Chapter III.3, Binny was among the oldest and largest textile mills in the country By the early 1970s, when the British controlling firm had made as much as it wished to from the company, ownership passed into the hands of the large Lakshmi Mills group of Coimbatore Then in 1976, the low-lying mills were devastated by the cyclone that hit Madras. The management used the opportunity to close the mills and called for the government to rescue them. There was a massive infusion of funds from the banks, but this did not help revival and, in 1980, the company again tried to close down the mills In 1981, the mills opened with a new management installed by the bankers, who now held about 45% of the equity with overseas holding limited to 21%.[69]

As a result of the fiscal drain of the company, but also because of the increasing mechanisation of the textile industry, as witnessed already in Bombay, the size of the workforce declined from 17,500 in 1960 to 13,000 in 1970 to 10,500 in 1980. Production figures for the same period, however, continued to rise At the same time, the number of supervisors rose from 400 to 600 to 1000 over the same period.[70]

Binny was where the first Indian trade union, the Madras Labour Union, had been established in 1918 (see Chapter III 3) Led by Anthony Pillai of the HMS for a long time after Independence, the MLU had withstood challenges from DMK, AIADMK, INTUC and

AITUC rivals, and by the end of the 1970s was being led by Kuchelan.[71]

In January 1981, the management tried (as it had done before) to persuade the union to agree to revised work norms on productivity and wages, but the union refused. The modernisation program that had been implemented was coming into force only very slowly The management then tried to close down the mill permanently from January 1981. This prompted the appointment of a commission by the government to study work norms and productivity, which recommended higher production figures and a greater workload The union steadfastly refused this and a joint committee of unions -- excluding INTUC and AIADMK unions -- organised a Madras bandh However, this was defeated by MGR, who declared a holiday on that day and issued an ordinance banning strikes in essential services Several workers were arrested and kept in custody for a fortnight for defying the ban The striking workers were in a difficult position, because it was hard for them to know who their real adversary was since the enterprise was 70% percent controlled by public financial institutions and there was no money in the company itself [72]

The mill opened in June 1981 and functioned until the end of 1983 In 1982, a new chairman, S N. Hada, reputed to be a specialist at turning around "sick" mills, was nominated by the financial institutions. However, it emerged that Hada had a plan to keep production levels low so that share values would crash and he could then buy the controlling interest in the company at low rates. In this, it was alleged, he was assisted by Kuchelan The workers were given allowances, benefits and advances to make them happy and thus strengthen Kuchelan's hand, but this only caused them to distrust him and abandon him in favour of Pillai at the next election. Under Pillai, the union achieved increased output, but this was against the interests of Hada and the management They therefore started provoking the workers, dismissing 400 of them and insisting that the facilities enjoyed by union members be cancelled The last straw came with the withdrawal of the month's wages and the disbursal of a paltry advance for an important festival The workers stormed the mills and management suspended operations, but neither a strike nor a lockout was announced Although the workers went back to work four months later, they were told that operations could not be resumed because of a raw materials shortage The mill finally re-opened but with a workforce that had been reduced by some 1500 in the two and a half years since Hada had taken over [73]

When Hada's plans came out in the open, the Tamil Nadu government offered to buy

the majority of the shares if the central government bought the rest. The Central Minister for Commerce, Pranab Mukherjee, is reported to have said that he was not interested in taking over junk, and that it was not the government's headache if the workers were not prepared to make the mills viable by sacrificing themselves. As for the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, MGR, while he eventually did get the finances to take over the mills, for the most part he paid only lip service to the workers' cause He made a big show of going out to meet one of their processions half-way, but did little that was substantive.[74]

In 1991 the mills were again reported closed and showing no signs of re-opening. The trouble arose over the management's decision to shift the processing house of the company, employing nearly 1200, to South Arcot district, this was presented to the Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI) as one of the options to rejuvenate the company, given the plentiful supply of natural gas and water in the new location The union saw in the move an attempt to convert the prime land in Madras on which the unit was located into real estate, and this they feared would be a prelude to shifting the entire company out of Madras. The main promoter of the management was by now Ramaswamy Udayar, a liquor baron and industrialist with tremendous political clout in Tamil Nadu, and he moved the Commissioner of Labour to seek permission for the shift. (Most of these moves came after the dismissal of Karunanidhi's DMK government which was considered hostile to Udayar).[75]

The matter was shunted back and forth — the Labour Commissioner denied permission for the closure till the workers had been consulted and a mutually acceptable deal arrived at; the Madras High Court quashed the Labour Commissioner's order; the Supreme Court dismissed the management's appeal; finally the Labour Commissioner had to start the process all over again. The IDBI continued to advocate the move. The new Chief Minister, Jayalalitha, ordered Rs 400 to be given to each worker but this was barely enough to compensate for four months of unpaid wages. Meanwhile, the matter was no closer to being resolved [76]

Textile Strike: Over 20,000 workers in the nearly 600 textile mills in Tamil Nadu went on strike from July 14, 1985. This was preceded by bilateral negotiations between a Joint Action Council (JAC) of all textile unions[77], and the South Indian Millowners Association (SIMA). The JAC had put forward a 28 point charter of demands, which included revision

of basic wages, increase in dearness allowance, casual leave benefits, employment opportunities for women, abolition of the substitution and contract systems, safeguards against retrenchment, and safety measures to be adopted in the mills. This was countered by a fourteen point charter of demands from the millowners, which included the scientific fixing of workloads so that productivity may be raised, management's right over deployment, the linking of wages to productivity, the linking of canteen prices to fluctuations in the Consumer Price Index (CPI), the lowering of the age of retirement, and the maintenance of 10 percent of the total workers as substitutes.

The JAC had declared that if the talks failed, they would go on strike from July 16 However, the decision of the Tamil Nadu government, even before the negotiations ended, to refer the matter to an Industrial Tribunal under Section 10-B of the Industrial Disputes Act 1947 (invoked when bilateral negotiations fail) angered the workers into striking from July 14th. The government's decision was seen as a pre-emptive move aimed at undermining the collective bargaining powers of the workers The Tribunal, besides having bypassed the collective bargaining powers of the workers, was distrusted by them because of its previously anti-worker decisions, such as the reduction of the bonus of the Coimbatore workers from the 12.33% they had been receiving to the 8.33% prescribed as the minimum in the Payment of Bonus Act of 1965. Besides, only twelve of the workers' demands were referred to the Tribunal.

Immediately after the official announcement referring the dispute to the tribunal, the INTUC and AIADMK unions backed out of the strike Members of these unions, however, were angry enough to defy their union's position and take an active part in the strike. The strike itself lasted only a few days. The decision to refer the matter to the tribunal had, in essence, diminished the collective bargaining strength of the workers.[78]

C: WEST BENGAL

The dispute figures for West Bengal, like in the other states, peak in 1977-1978 with the lifting of the Emergency. They do not peak, as in Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, in the years immediately preceding the Emergency, for the government in power then was trying hard to compensate for the excesses of the first UF period These excesses are reflected in the dispute figures for 1968-70, which are the years the state saw a wave of gheraos and labour

unrest

A breakdown of the dispute figures into strikes and lockouts provides a clearer picture of the state of industrial relations in the state (see Table 14). While the persondays lost due to strikes as opposed to lockouts rose to 79.4% in 1975 from 43.1% in 1973, this situation was reversed dramatically during the Emergency with the figure dropping to 11.2%. This has remained the trend since, except for 1979 when the jute workers' strike meant that 84.3% of the persondays lost were due to strikes. The loss in persondays attributable to lockouts remained in the high nineties throughout the 1980s, except for 1984, which again saw a reversal of the situation for reasons I have been unable to identify. Lockouts as a percent of disputes went up from 43 6% in 1973 to 90.9% in 1985 and 83.1% in 1986. Managements have obviously gained the upper hand, and labour has been severely restrained.

Jute: The state of industrial relations in the jute industry in Calcutta is comparable to that of the cotton textile industry in Bombay and Madras As seen in Chapter III.2, it remains the largest industry in Calcutta, employing a quarter of the labour in organised industry. Yet much of its profits are made from trading gains rather than manufacturing, and there has been little incentive to reinvest or modernise. While foreign demand for jute goods has decreased, domestic demand has increased, and the future looks bright. Yet IJMA continues to project an image of decline in availability of raw jute and demand for finished goods, so as to pressure the government to grant more concessions.[79]

IJMA also used the image of decline to maintain an "inability to pay" argument with regard to wages. This claim, however, was completely contradicted by the rise in productivity in the industry. In 1951, with an average daily workforce of 279,000, production amounted to 888,100 tonnes; in 1979, while the workforce had declined to 221,000, production had gone up to 977,000 tonnes The index of productivity had gone up from 3.18 in 1951 to 4.21 in 1979 This rise in productivity was achieved without any technological upgradation and meant a sharp increase in the workload of some 24.12% between 1972 and 1979, corresponding to a labour component of 46,000.[80] A large part of this workload has been shifted by permanent workers onto casual and temporary workers, who make up about 20% of the industry. About 60% of workers are piece-rated, but since basic wages tied to piece work are dwarfed by the dearness allowance which has nothing to do with the production level, no more than 10% of

the actual earnings of this section of workers is tied to piece work However, in order to earn this piece rate, and to fulfil norms assigned, permanent workers contract out the work to bhagwalas, whom they pay out of their earnings.[81]

The piece rates were fixed by a Wage Board in 1948 Jute workers have never had the benefit of a wage scale; there are no annual increments, so that all workers doing a job earn the same regardless of seniority. The relative difference in wages between unskilled and skilled workers had gone down by 20% between 1948 and 1980, providing little incentive for workers to acquire skills. Nonetheless, 60% of workers in the industry were skilled but, because their skills were specific to the industry, they could not transfer easily to other industries when retrenched.[82]

There are fourteen unions organising the jute workers. The Bharat Chatkal Mazdoor Union (BCMU), affiliated to CITU is the oldest and largest, with a claimed membership of 60 percent; INTUC is second. The others are clustered around these two [83]

The jute workers have a history of united industry-wide strikes: in 1969 for 8 days, again in 1971, in 1974 for 33 days, in 1975 for 48 days, and in 1979 for 50 days. All the strikes were over the issue of fixing wages and scales; most succeeded in winning only very minor concessions in the form of a token rise in wages rather than a drawing up of grades and scales. Agreements arrived at in 1969, 1970 and 1972, all went unimplemented.[84] There was bitter union rivalry during the 1974 strike, with INTUC, a section of HMS, and NFITU entering into an agreement with the millowners while the other central unions decided to go on with the strike.[85]

The 1979 strike finally succeeded in securing the appointment of two expert committees by the government, one for the evaluation of work norms, and another for fixing grades and scales. Although it considerably delayed appointing the committees, the government refused to appoint even a single representative of the millowners to them Finally, however, the committee on grades and scales made no dramatic recommendations It had little to say on the question of piece-rated workers. Nonetheless, the workers were keen to have it accepted, as it was the first time that wages had been fixed scientifically rather than in an ad hoc fashion [86] The committee on workloads noted the increase in workload and the perpetuation of the bhagwala system due to this. But, rather than recommend monetary compensation for the increase in workload, which it felt might "tend to affect the wage/remuneration pattern and

create anomalies in the wage structure evolved through awards, Board recommendations and collective bargaining over a period of time", it suggested a reversion to earlier work norms.[87]

IJMA rejected the recommendations of both committees and took the matter to court, where its appeal was turned down The government, too, would not accede to IJMA'S demands that the recommendations be quashed and a new committee be constituted with IJMA sponsored members IJMA then refused to resume talks with the workers, either bipartite or tripartite, and began to violate the terms of the 1979 agreement. It also stepped up its offensive by keeping 15 to 20 mills under lock-out by rotation. Some 65,000 workers were thus out of employment all along This lock-out of jute mills by rotation has become a regular feature since the Emergency The Left Front government has proved helpless to urge implementation in the face of IJMA's obduracy [88]

Driven to their limits, the unions gave a call for a day's strike in August 1982. However, rival unions continued to trade charges against each other. A meeting of all the unions in March 1983 did not produce any results because of CITU's refusal to strike. In 1982 and 1983, some of the locked out mills opened, with conditions that were even worse than before: the hours of work were increased, wages or premiums reduced, and agitations prohibited With the expiry of the unimplemented 1979 tripartite agreement in 1982, the unions demanded its renewal, as well as the implementation of the recommendations of the expert committees There were also certain new demands, such as house rent, canteen allowance, and an improvement in the terms of contract labour. The millowners refused to negotiate, however The unions began to discuss an indefinite strike, but CITU resolutely opposed the idea, because it was committed to a "responsible" position in order to assist the CPI(M) government [89] Finally, in January 1984 the unions declared an indefinite strike.

The strike went on for 83 days at the end of which a tripartite agreement was signed between IJMA, the National Jute Manufacturers Corporation (NJMC), and 15 unions representing workers. The agreement contained few concessions to workers' demands: it reintroduced the already accepted norms as per the 1979 agreement, and created the possibility of linking piece rates to productivity, it called for the creation of a state government apex body that would make recommendations on changing workloads when necessary, which effectively cancelled the expert committee's recommendations; it promised that the millowners would make all attempts to deposit provident funds as far as practicable, without acknowledging that

the millowners had been notorious for defaulting on these payments; it provided no guarantee that millowners would not seek lock-outs intentionally The only issue on which the agreement seemed to concede workers' demands was on canteen facilities The agreement was thus seen as a clear defeat for the workers Despite this, the chief minister was reluctant to allow the union leaders to defer the signing of the agreement in order that they might think it over, and he urged them to sign the memorandum of understanding without changing a word. Representatives of UTUC, IFTU and BMS walked out without signing.[90]

The 1984 agreement expired in 1987, and IJMA tried as usual to avoid negotiating a new settlement The union government had launched a soft loan scheme for the modernisation of viable mills in November 1986, but the industry had shown little interest in it Meanwhile, the industry had resorted to unilateral closure or lockout of 26 of West Bengal's 56 jute mills, rendering about 90,000 workers jobless. Despite the crisis this caused for the workers, CITU refused to take up agitations, and recommended instead measures for the millowners to solve their realisation problem.[91]

Thus millowners, using the argument of a declining industry, had managed to keep the workers in check, and in this they were aided by a government that, while occasionally antagonistic to them, as on the issue of the expert committees, had increasingly begun to share their position.

Cotton Textile: The cotton textile industry was another site of dispute, with 55,000 workers in 1981 demanding the implementation of the industry-wide tripartite settlement arrived at in March 1979. They were also demanding the reinstatement of those dismissed during the Emergency. The workers had been burdened with a heavy workload, their wages were low and basically stagnant, especially when compared to wages in the industry in Bombay and Madras, and all the Calcutta mills were old and decrepit and hardly conducive to productivity However, an expert committee appointed by the government did not take these facts into account, and recommended only that the fixing of grades and scales be linked to occupational wage differentials. It made no recommendations on reducing workloads.[92] In 1984, some 60,000 workers launched an agitation to demand implementation of the wage grades suggested by the expert committee and ratified by the labour minister The millowners refused. CITU did not want a strike but was forced to fall in line with the other unions.[93]

Although the outcome of this incident has not been reported, it is illustrative both of the decline in the cotton textile industry — seen already in Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu — and of the unwillingness of CITU to take militant action

Hosiery Hosiery workers in Calcutta went on a strike that lasted over 80 days in 1984. Hosiery is one of the main industries in the small-scale and largely unorganised sector in West Bengal. It has been estimated that there were more than 1500 units employing about 50,000 workers, each unit employing on average 20 to 25 workers, and some employing less than ten in order to avoid the application of factory legislation Although there were a number of units, ownership was concentrated in a few hands, and the profits made by these big owners were quite large, given the increase in the price of the goods.[94] The workers had always been poorly paid, with no system of DA or statutory benefits like Provident Fund, and gratuity. Most workers were on piece-rates, with no security of service. In 1976 a government notification fixing minimum wages in the industry was issued, but the owners used the Emergency as an excuse to avoid implementing it. In 1978, workers went on strike for 78 days to demand implementation but, despite the owners being forced to sign a tripartite agreement, minimum wages were not implemented in a number of units.[95]

There are several unions in the industry, affiliated to CITU, AITUC, INTUC or some Naxalite faction In 1983, CITU, AITUC, and Naxalite-affiliated unions submitted a minimum charter of demands They formed a joint committee which organised a day's token strike in August 1983, and then a general strike in February 1984. The CITU leadership had wanted to postpone the strike, but was forced by the angry rank and file to call the strike.[96]

The Labour Directorate and even the labour minister called several conciliation meetings They also issued a minimum wage notification which fixed a minimum wage lower than what had been offered by the management before the strike. The strike in Howrah was withdrawn after the union there signed a separate agreement with the management. The agreement had the full consent of the CITU state leadership, despite the fact that the strike was still continuing in Calcutta and other places, and this amounted to breaking it. Finally, the chief minister himself had to intervene to settle the dispute. The new settlement offered little monetary gain to the workers As well, it left the duration of the settlement unspecified, whereas Marxist trade unions elsewhere in the country refuse to sign agreements lasting more

than three years because inflation could render them inadequate [97]

Bata and Dunlop. Two incidents that have been widely held as indicative of the state of industrial relations in Calcutta are the lockout at Bata and the strike at Dunlop.[98] In Bata, the management declared a lockout in July 1988 on the grounds of indiscipline by workers The workers were organised into the Bata Mazdoor Union which, from its inception forty years ago, had been affiliated to AITUC It was also, interestingly, the only union in the enterprise Immediately after the lockout, the labour minister issued a statement to the effect that it was illegal, but he did not formally declare it so The union demanded unconditional withdrawal of the lockout. The management placed 37 humiliating conditions for withdrawal on the union The conditions were based on the claim that the factory at Batanagar was not making profits, but production figures cited for this period cast doubt on the veracity of this claim

Some support for the unions was forthcoming from the government All the Bata retail outlets were picketed with the help of CPI(M), but the management obtained a court order to stop this. Jyoti Basu, the chief minister, wrote to Thomas Bata, the boss of the company, who, however, refused to intervene in the local management's decisions Finally, on the advice of the chief minister, bipartite negotiations were begun without any preconditions The union had to surrender and accept all the management's conditions These conditions included the curtailment of trade union rights and the granting of rights to the management to reorganise departments, freely deploy and transfer workers, and declare them surplus

The other widely noted case was that of the strike by 5,500 workers at the Dunlop factory. In this case, too, the workers emerged from government initiated negotiations with few gains The labour minister issued a proposal to end the strike, which included the workers' demand for a wage increase, but also the management's demand for an increased workload and seven-day continuous work Strangely enough, CITU used a signature campaign among the general workers to force the local union to accept the minister's proposal and end the strike. When two thousand signatures had been collected, the chief minister was called on to intervene, and he supervised a settlement between the workers and the management which contained almost exactly the same terms as originally included in the minister's proposal

Metal Box· Ramaswamy describes the case of Metal Box which, while far from being

typical or common, may well be a precursor of future trends on the West Bengal industrial relations front The Calcutta enterprise of this multinational firm, which pioneered the manufacture of packaging materials in India, had three plants There was only one union in the entire enterprise, a rare situation in Calcutta The workers elected their representatives to the union, and these representatives further elected the office bearers, who then decided which central federation the union should be affiliated to The union had kept up with changes in the political climate, swinging to the Left in the 1960s, and to the Congress when it regained power in the 1970s Industrial relations in the enterprise had not been tumultuous in the past, except during the first Left Front government The company had been enjoying all the benefits of a pioneer as well as a near monopoly until the 1980s, when it began to suffer a decline. At this point, it decided to close down one of its three units This was resisted by the union, which called a strike The strike went on for three months, even after the workers of the other two units no longer saw the point in continuing it. The reason the union leaders gave for prolonging the strike against the wishes of its members was that they had been instructed to do so by the CITU state leadership. In reaction, INTUC began to make its presence felt, and was able to rally hundreds of workers who wanted to end the strike. With the strike nearly six months old, and INTUC gaining strength, the union agreed to a settlement with the management The terms of the settlement constituted a clear victory for the management. This did not provoke an immediate revolt against the CITU union, and observers predicted that the domination of the trade union scene in Calcutta by the ruling party would preclude such a revolt. However, in the next union elections, INTUC swept the poll, despite the fact that it had no concrete alternative program. Its victory was symbolic of the growing disappointment with CITU and its loss of credibility.[99]

Contrary to its own avowed policy, the government has also been willing to deploy police against striking workers During the Amrita Bazar Patrika strike, police were sent in to remove striking workers from the employer's premises, albeit in accordance with a court order to that effect Strikes in the Indian Oil Corporation and Industrial Development Bank of India were similarly dealt with [100]

The Left Front government has, almost since its return to power in 1977, actively advised unions to take the path of moderation and "responsibility" At the end of the third

conference of the West Bengal CITU in 1980, the General Secretary asked the trade unionists to bear in mind the nature and limits of the Left Front government before resorting to any industrial action, especially in government and quasi-government establishments. He maintained that strikes were not essential for redressal of workers' grievances, nor were they the only manifestation of their militancy.[101]

The chief minister himself has repeatedly stressed that strike should be considered the "last weapon". In 1986, he was reported to have warned that "irresponsible trade unionism, affecting the growth of industries, will not be tolerated and workers should take equal interest with the government in the economic development of their respective units and areas".[102] At the seventh conference of CITU in 1991, Basu's homily dwelt on the importance of the private sector in the Indian context, and the need for trade unions to adopt a more constructive approach. He called on workers of state-owned undertakings to improve productivity, quality and discipline.[103]

In 1992, Basu declared that the civil and police administration system should tackle trade union hooliganism as any other kind of law and order violation. While trade union leaders interpreted his instructions to the administration to act impartially as meaning that the police would not be sent in at the request of the management, the interpretation of a party leader close to the command centre was that no one's democratic rights should be curtailed. This implies that a section of workers on strike cannot prevent others from going to work and, if they do, it would be justifiable for the police to be summoned on behalf of the strike-breakers. The party leader's interpretation of the statement indicated a shift in the party line to a more flexible, pragmatic approach whereby labour was no longer regarded as a special constituency of the party.[104]

Managers, including managers of multinationals, have reason then to be happy with the government. They now prefer to deal with CITU than with any other union, believing that it is more open to persuasion through logic and reason and has, unlike INTUC, the capacity to implement a settlement. This moderation of CITU appears to have utility for INTUC, which is now playing an increasingly militant role.[105]

Table 15 provides data for each state on the number of disputes referred to conciliation and adjudication.[106] In Maharashtra in 1984, of the 7,277 disputes referred to the industrial

relations machinery, 2,494 or 34% failed at conciliation, and 1,847 or 25% were referred further for adjudication. Of these, 1,109 or 60% received an award in favour of the workers. In Tamil Nadu in 1978, of the 8,204 cases referred to the state machinery, 1,484 or 18% failed at conciliation, and 722, or 8 8% were referred for further adjudication. Of these, 211, or 29 2% received a verdict in favour of the workers In West Bengal in 1983, of 9,889 cases referred to the industrial relations machinery, 415 or 4.2% failed at conciliation, and 710, or 7% were referred to adjudication Of these, 349, or 49% received verdicts in favour of the workers The figures for failure at conciliation do indicate that the Bombay disputes are the most recalcitrant to government intervention, and those in West Bengal are most amenable to it This could be seen as further evidence of CITU being willing to accept the government's verdict Of the cases referred to adjudication, on the other hand, the Bombay labour courts seem to have favoured workers more often than in Calcutta, and far more often than in Madras

4: WAGES; PRODUCTIVITY DEALS; EMPLOYMENT SECURITY; WORK SAFETY

A look at Table 16 will show that wages have risen at a more or less similar rate in Maharashtra and West Bengal over the period from 1961 to 1985. Tamil Nadu has fared much worse, although up until 1966 it had the same rates as the other two.

The similarity of wages in Maharashtra and West Bengal may be explained to some extent by the similarity in some of their major industries, such as machinery and machine tools, transport equipment, and food products However, this cannot explain why Tamil Nadu, which has some of the same industries, has lower wages (see Table 10, and Chapter III.2). A better explanation may lie elsewhere The Left Front government, on assuming office in 1977, raised the wages of all state and local government establishments, as well as in government schools and universities It also intervened to effect tripartite agreements in the engineering, jute and tea industries, which established better wage scales In Bombay, on the other hand, where the government has not been concerned to intervene at this level, the higher wages seem better attributed to the militancy of the newer trade unionists who have successfully won improved wage deals The Tamil Nadu workers seem to have got the wrong end of the stick in both

cases.

A report on minimum wages states that in West Bengal they have been fixed only for unskilled workers, whereas in Maharashtra they have been fixed for every category of worker — highly skilled, skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled The report also highlights state-wise differences in minimum wages in the same industry A lentil millworker in Bombay, for instance, is entitled to a minimum wage of Rs. 705, while in Calcutta it is Rs 488 [107]

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) has varied only mildly between the states over the years (see Table 17), although it was recently reported that CPI numbers rose at a higher rate in 1990 in Calcutta than in Bombay, with traders allegedly hoarding and manipulating the market.[108] It would seem then that the Madras workers are the worst off economically, with lower wages, but prices that are as high as elsewhere

Increasingly, workers' concerns are going beyond wages and monetary benefits to questions of productivity requirements because of heavier workloads and greater management control over workers, or obversely, reductions in the labour component through lay-offs and voluntary retirement.

In Bombay, outside leaders like Mehta and Samant appraise themselves purely on a monetary yardstick Thus, upon entry into Lever and Murphy, Samant asked for increased bonus and other benefits, when the issue that had been exercising the workers was the contracting out system which reduced employment. On the other hand, the worker-leaders, such as Hadke at Philips, refused to confine themselves to monetary questions only, and also refused to make any concessions on productivity or increased managerial prerogatives over deployment and dismissal The Marxist unions, too, have generally not agreed to be party to productivity agreements. Managements have thus come to prefer working with outside unionists like Samant, who, however tough a stance they may seem to take initially, are willing to make deals that concede increased workloads in return for higher wages Outside leaders have also not been concerned to halt the process whereby the component of permanent workers is being gradually reduced through contracting out, voluntary retirement schemes, and non replacement of retired staff, since their performance is judged only in terms of the benefits they can win for the union, regardless of its size [109]

In Madras, too, there have been few settlements that have not spelled out productivity norms. For instance, the TI Cycles settlement linked DA to productivity, and the Larsen &

Toubro settlement specified management rights to maintain discipline and efficiency and to recruit, deploy and discharge workers Every Madras union, regardless of its political hue, is willing to sign productivity deals. Madras has also witnessed the concomitant of the productivity settlement the scaling down of the labour force in large enterprises. Thus almost every major firm in Madras — Binny, Dunlop, EID Parry, Shaw Wallace, Simpson, and TVS, to name a few — has operated voluntary retirement schemes and trimmed its workforce significantly.[110]

In Calcutta, by contrast, CITU (as well as INTUC) have in general refused to be drawn into productivity deals, preferring to forego higher wages for modest wage gains.[111] A manager who was otherwise pleased with CITU commented: "...we in Bengal are far behind the south and the west with respect to productivity" [112] The reason for CITU's position is its commitment to enhancing employment, whereas increased work norms, in conditions of stagnant industrial investment and mounting unemployment, would only serve to push more people out of work

Ramaswamy[113] states that the size of the settlements arrived at in return for enhanced p.oductivity are most attractive in Bombay and least so in Calcutta, with Madras falling in between Madras is also at the mid-point between Bombay and Calcutta with regard to the retroactive payment of contracted benefits While Bombay workers are usually fully compensated for the interim period between settlements, and Calcutta workers get prospective benefits, with only a token payment for the interim, in Madras the workers get a lump-sum payment amounting to between a quarter and a third of contracted benefits.

There are, in fact, instances where CITU and the Left Front government have tried to create or maintain employment at the expense of their own declared objectives of enhancing production Whereas elsewhere, and even in Bengal, trade unions have demanded that children of employees be given preferential treatment in employment, CPI(M) and CITU have taken the stand that recruitment should be through the employment exchanges Ramaswamy[114] suggests that the reasons behind this position are two-fold Firstly, since many of the existing workers are non-Bengali, this is an attempt to make room for "sons of the soil". Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the government's hold on the employment exchanges can be used to get jobs for those favoured by the party and the union This insistence on employing party nominees can be seen in the following incident At the building of a thermal plant at Haldia, considered

a key project because it would alleviate West Bengal's chronic power shortage, CITU did everything it could to assist in speeding up the work. Nonetheless, the project became a byword for inefficiency. This was due to the government's policy of forcing the contractors, who had been allocated various parts of the project, to hire CITU nominees. Since these nominees were not always skilled workers, the contractors were persuaded to take them on as helpers to the skilled workers. Work slowed down, costs increased, and the contractors complained that they had to go to the minister in Calcutta for every little thing. A similar situation has been reported for a big company trying to set up a chemicals unit at Haldia.[115]

In fact, available employment figures suggest that West Bengal seems to have been the least successful in maintaining employment in the private sector. Table 7 shows a decline in the numbers employed in large establishments in the private sector in West Bengal between 1978-79 and 1987-88. In both Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, by contrast, the same sector saw a rise in employment between 1978-79 and 1984-85 and, despite a decline between 1984-85 and 1987-88, the 1987-88 figures were higher than the figures for 1978-79. However, in terms of total employment figures for the state, West Bengal figures for 1987-88 show an improvement over those for 1984-85, a sign, perhaps, that the situation is improving. The remarkable figures are those of Tamil Nadu, which saw a steady increase in total employment between 1967 and 1987, and a doubling of the figures for factory employment (Table 8). By contrast, Table 8 shows a decline in factory employment in both Maharashtra and West Bengal between 1983 and 1984, the decline being sharper in the former state.

Turning briefly to Table 9 for trends in employment in factories according to age and sex, it may be noted that the Tamil Nadu labour administration has been the most lax. Figures for child and adolescent workers remain high in Tamil Nadu through the years, whereas in Maharashtra and West Bengal they are relatively low. The Tamil Nadu figures reflect a violation of the Employment of Children Act of 1938, which prohibits the employment of children under 14 years and, in some industries, under 15 or 17 years.[116]

Table 18 records the number of fatal and non-fatal injuries in factories per thousand workers employed. Between 1972 and 1983, West Bengal consistently had the highest rate of non-fatal injuries (106.48 in 1983), with those in Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu being dramatically lower (76.99 and 28.31, respectively, in 1983). The Maharashtra figures have, however, risen over the years, whereas the Tamil Nadu figures have fallen. It could, perhaps,

be conjectured that West Bengal's high rates are due to the lack of investment in technological upgradation, as seen in the descriptions of the jute and cotton textile industries in section 3 above. I have not discussed fatal injuries, the reported figures rates being extremly low in all three states.

5: SUMMARY

In the material presented above, there are few facts that establish conclusively that workers in one state have fared overwhelmingly, and in all respects, better than those in the others. Nevertheless, it does seem possible to draw some patterns out of the experiences of workers in the three states, to suggest in what ways some have done better than others, and to locate the causes of these patterns in the variables described in Chapter III.

Workers in Bombay (and Pune) seem on the whole to have fared the best in terms of wages, bonuses and other benefits. A significant advance that Maharashtrian workers have made is in terms of their organisations, with the emergence of worker-led unions that can challenge the industrialists on the basis of insider knowledge. Nonetheless, the trend thus far has been dominance by outside leaders, albeit independent of party affiliation, and they have been willing to make concessions on production controls and employment security. The consequence has been that Bombay has seen a dramatic growth of ancillaries and contract workshops, and a decline during the early 1980s in the number of permanent workers in the organised sector The government, apart from being willing to use its repressive apparatus in favour of the management, has been relatively non-interventionist. If increased collective bargaining is a sign of the strength of the workers' movemen, then certainly the workers in Bombay and Pune have done better than those in the other states.

West Bengal workers, too, have fared well in terms of wages, but lack the benefits granted to Bombay workers in exchange for productivity deals. While comparable figures are not available for Bombay and Madras, it is clear, however, that workers in Calcutta have been forced onto the defensive, and managements seem to have the upper hand. Still, they have been able to resist increases in workload with greater success, although this has not halted the decline in permanent employment, which seems to have taken place for a variety of reasons. Neither have they been able to force technological upgradation and maintenance of work safety,

as witnessed by the exceedingly high injury rates. While initially favoured with a sympathetic government that was willing to enforce certain industry-wide wage agreements, and to refrain from sending in the police to aid managements, they are no longer assured of this It would seem that the situation of having been let down that workers in Bengal might experience is almost worse than having been prepared not to expect government assistance from the start. Yet the party in power has remained heavily interventionist, with the scene of most conciliation efforts being no longer the labour department but the chief minister's office. As a consequence of the "moderation" required of the dominant union, CITU, traditions of collective bargaining have not really been strengthened

Madras workers seem to have fared the worst in most respects The average wages in the city are the lowest (although workers have managed to secure better benefits in exchange for productivity concessions than workers in Calcutta) Nor have workers been able to resist productivity deals and retrenchment schemes. On the other hand, while intensely politicised, they have been able to resist fragmentation along party lines within the enterprise unions, and have won the right to a secret ballot to choose the union leadership They have, however, not been able to reduce dependence on outside leaders, nor have worker leaders emerged. Managements definitely have the upper hand. The government has rarely intervened, except cosmetically, on the side of workers, but is known to be pro-management and willing to use its repressive apparatus against protesting workers. In terms of numbers employed, however, Tamil Nadu has registered a steady and impressive increase over the twenty-year period from 1967-68 to 1987-88.

NOTES

1. N.N.Chatterjee, Industrial Relations in India's Developing Economy (Calcutta: Allied Book Agency, 1984), 369-370.

2. Although enacted in 1971-72, the Act was enforced only after the declaration of Emergency in 1975, because before that the Centre argued that it was itself bringing in a new Bill incorporating the Act's most progressive features Ibid , 101

3. Ibid , 373-375; see also V.P Shintre, Maharashtra Recognition of Trade Unions and Prevention of Unfair Labour Practices Act, 1971 (New Delhi Orient Longman, 1975).

4. See Shintre, Maharashtra Act, 4-26, for the definition of illegal strikes

5. Chatterjee, Industrial Relations, 375.

6. Bagaram Tulpule, "Mockery of 'Protecting' Workers," EPW, 1 November, 1980.

7. "Labour: Ominous Move," EPW, 24 May 1980; Chatterjee, Industrial Relations, 759.

8. E.A Ramaswamy, Worker Consciousness and Trade Union Response (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988), 89.

9. Chatterji, Politics in West Bengal, 144.

10. Chatterjee, Industrial Relations, 101.

11. Sandeep Pendse, "The Datta Samant Phenomenon," EPW, 18 April, 1981.

12. Ibid., 697.

13. Ramaswamy, Worker Consciousness, 24.

14. Shanta Vaidya, Trade Union Organisations in Maharashtra: A Study of Trade Unions in Maharashtra State (Bombay: Research and Training Institute, 1985), 24.

15. Ramaswamy, Worker Consciousness, 20-22.

16. Pendse, "Datta Samant Phenomenon", 18 April 1981. He suggests that INTUC's newly-found militancy in the immediate post-Emergency period may also have been part of the Congress (I) tactic to create economic and political instability when in opposition.

17. Ramaswamy, Workers' Consciousness, 18.

18. Vaidya, Trade Union Organisations, 69.

19. Due to their better education, knowledge of statutory procedures, fluency in English and long experience in the field, the top leaders were often addressed as "Sahib" (Sir) by the rank and file members The executive committee did retain a measure of control over the office-bearers, such as the sanctioning of all expenditures, and the executive could ask the office bearers to resign, but Vaidya found that in only 3 of the 40 unions studied had this ever been done. Ibid.

20. Ramaswamy, Worker Consciousness, 41-42.

21. Ibid., 79-80.

22. Ibid., 84.

23. Ibid., 86-87

24. Ibid.

25. Chatterji, Politics in West Bengal, 134-35.

26. Manoranjan Ray of CITU, cited in Ibid., 134.

27. Ibid., 139-140.

28. Ramaswamy, Worker Consciousness, 175-176, 196.

29. Ibid., 198-190.

30. This is one of the best documented strikes in India. It has inspired a book -- Rajni Bakshi, The Long Haul (Bombay: Build Documentation Centre, 1986) -- which provides a fascinating blow-by-blow account of the entire strike, and a documentary film -- Pradeep Dixit, Although the City Looks Quiet, (Bombay: Indian School of Social Sciences, 1988) -- besides numerous articles.

31. Debashish Bhattacharjee, "Unions, State and Capital in Western India: Structural Determinants of the 1982 Bombay Textile Strike," in R.Southall ed , Labour and Unions in Asia and Africa (London: Macmillan Press, 1987), 211-212.

32. Amrita Chhachhi and Paul Kurien, "New Phase in Textile Unionism?" EPW, 20 February 1982, 267); Bagaram Tulpule, "Bombay Textile Workers' Strike. A Different View," EPW, 24 April-1 May 1982, 270 Tulpule himself puts the number of those displaced at 32,000

33. Bhattacharjee, "Unions, State and Capital," 223, Chhachhi and Kurien, "New Phase?" 270-271; Salim Lakha, "Organised Labour and Militant Unionism. The Bombay Textile Workers' Strike of 1982," Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars, 20 (2), 1988, 44 The terrible conditions of wage and work were especially upsetting because the cotton textile industry had been pace-setting in many ways soon after Independence. The minimum wage was first actualised in this industry, as was the price-indexed dearness allowance Tulpule, "Bombay Textile Workers," 198.

34. Tulpule, "Bombay Textile Workers", 720.

35. While initially the left unions supported Samant and organised a state-wide strike on April 19,1982, later there were reports of a rift between Samant and the parties that constituted the TUJAC. The latter called the former economistic and isolationist, their own interest in the strike being as an opportunity to build class consciousness among the workers. Lakha, "Organised Labour," 47, 51, Bhattacharjee, "Union, State and Capital," 227

36. Contributions were made by the blue-collar non-textile workers in Samant's other unions, rural workers and peasants, other unions, West bengal's Left Front Chief Minister, Jyoti Basu, the teachers of schools with children of striking workers (who, in addition, collected exam fees, in spite of which many children were forced to leave school and take up jobs) Lakha, "Organised Labour," 50.

37. Gail Omvedt, "Textile Strike Turns Political," EPW, 27 August 1983, 1510.

38 Tulpule, "Bombay Textile Workers", 721.

39. Lakha, "Organised Labour," 47-49.

40 In a case filed by the Bombay Mill Owners' Association (BMOA) in the High Court, the Judge ruled that this amounted to a "breach of statutory duty on the part of the Government". Bakshi, The Long Haul, 171

41 Lakha, "Organised Labour," 51-53.

42. Bhattacharjee, "Unions, State and Capital," 229.

43 Omvedt, "Textile Strike", 1510

44 Many of those who had been most active in the strike were turned away from the mill gates by the management, especially in the less modern mills. The managers of the more modern mills were less inclined to be partial towards RMMS workers Bhattacharjee, "Unions, State and Capital", 229

45 Gurbir Singh, "'Displaced' Textile Workers: Kotwal Report," EPW, 28 March, 1987.

46. Rajni Bakshi, "Will the Phoenix Rise Again?" Illustrated Weekly of India, 19-25 October, 1991.

47. Manju Parikh-Baruah, "Bombay Textile Strike. What Lies Ahead?" EPW, 5 June, 1982, 839.

48. Singh, "'Displaced' Textile Workers". The millowners wanted to link the rehabilitation package to deferment of sales tax and electricity dues, and permission to sell the land, and blame non-payment of dues to lack of government cooperation over these demands. Bakshi, "Will the Phoenix".

49. "Textile Industry: Putting 'Sickness' to Use," EPW, 8 October, 1983.

50. Bakshi, "Will the Phoenix".

51 Bhattacharjee, "Unions, State and Capital", 229-231. It has, however, been questioned whether the intransigence of the millowners and the government was compatible with wider economic and political stability The strike depressed many sectors of Bombay's economy, such as the dyes and chemicals industries, transport, hotels in the industrial areas, retailers in basic commodities and in luxury goods, such as gold and silver. And, of course, cotton growers were severely affected. Lakha, "Organised Labour", 49.

52 Omvedt "Textile Strike", 1509

53 Lakha, "Organised Labour", 50

54 Omvedt, "Textile Strike", Lakha, "Organised Labour".

55. Bakshi, "Will the Phoenix".

56. Radha Iyer, "A Classic Class Struggle," EPW, 7 October, 1989, 2231.

57. Ramaswamy, Worker Consciousness, 58-72

58. Ramaswamy, Worker Consciousness, 69

59. Another aspect of worker leaders that the Philips case reveals is their vulnerability to criticism even from other workers Even though Hadke functioned in a relatively democratic manner, and could not be accused of corruption, the workers were willing to allow him less latitude than they would an outside leader, and were quick to challenge his leadership when he showed signs of becoming autocratic

60. My account of this dispute is drawn from Iyer, "Classic Struggle", and idem, "Telco Dispute: What Is It All About?" EPW, 23-30 December, 1989.

61. Anita Abraham, "Beedi Workers of Bombay," EPW, 1 November, 1980.

62. Sandeep Pendse, "Industrial Violence: A Case Study," EPW, 15 March, 1980.

63. Rajni Bakshi, "Firing at National Rayon," EPW, 2 February 1985

64. Gurbir Singh, "Policing Workers in an Industrial Estate," EPW, 31 January, 1987, 171.

65. Ramaswamy, Worker Consciousness, 98-107.

66. Ibid., 89.

67. "Tell-Tale Verdict," EPW, 30 March, 1991.

68. Ramaswamy, Worker Consciousness, 116.

69. Ibid., 115-116.

70. "Beating Down Binny Workers," EPW, 14 February, 1981.

71. Ramaswamy, Worker Consciousness, 117-124

72. "Beating Down", EPW.

73. Ramaswamy, Worker Consciousness, 119-124.

74. "Beating Down", EPW

75. K.P. Sunil, "The Reopening of Binny Mills is Still Doubtful," Illustrated Weekly of India, 2-8 November, 1991.

76. Ibid.

77. CITU, AITUC, INTUC, HMS, DMK, AIADMK, and Janata unions. Gnana Surabhi Mani and R Shenbagavalli, "Textile Workers' Strike in Tamil Nadu," EPW, 31 August, 1985.

78 Ibid.

79. Ajit Sengupta, "Dynamics of Class Relations in Jute Industry," EPW, 10-17 July, 1982, 1148

80. Timir Basu, "Shrinking Workforce in Jute Industry," EPW.

81. Idem, "Mirage of Wages and Scales," EPW, 6 June 1981; Ramaswamy, Worker Consciousness, 181-182

82 Sengupta, "Dynamics of Class Relations," 1152.

83 Ramaswamy, Worker Consciousness, 183.

84. Timir Basu, "Owners Flout Settlements," EPW, 12 May, 1984. Idem, "Wage Scales for Jute Workers," EPW.

85. Idem, "Wage Scales for Jute Workers" EPW, Biren Roy, "Jute Owners' Offensive Goes Unopposed," EPW, 7 August, 1982.

86. Timir Basu, "Mirage of Grades and Scales," EPW, 6 June, 1981; Idem "Wage Scales."

87. Basu, "Shrinking Workforce".

88. Basu, "Jute Workers' Strike"; idem, "Owners Flout Settlements".

89 The strategy began to hurt CITU which lost control over a number of work-committees. In a by election in the constituency of some of the working class areas, the CPI(M) vote declined sharply over 1980 levels. Ibid.

90. Basu, in "Owners Flout Settlements", cites reports that overseas buyers, Russians and Japanese, were camping at a nearby hotel when the negotiations were about to become uncompromising, and the threat of the diversion of their bulk orders to Bangladesh precipitated the accord

91 "Workers Pay the Price," EPW, 27 February, 1988.

92 Basu, "Raw Deal for Bengal Textile Workers" EPW; idem, "Restive Textile Workers," EPW, 3-10 January, 1981

93 Ramaswamy, Worker Consciousness, 185.

94. "Hosiery Workers' Desperate Struggle," EPW, 21 April, 1984.

95 Ibid

96. Ibid.

97. Ibid.; Ramaswamy, Worker Consciousness, 185.

98. "Lessons of Two Major Industrial Disputes in West Bengal," EPW, 14 January, 1989; Mannika Chopra, "West Bengal Industry: Trade Unions Retreat before Management Militancy," Times of India, 26 April, 1989, also mentions both the above incidents

99. Ramaswamy, Worker Consciousness, 210.

100. Ibid., 194.

101 Timir Basu, "West Bengal CITU Conference," EPW, 5 July, 1980

102. "Advice to Workers," EPW, 8-15 March, 1988.

103. "Trade Unions: Shrinking Limits," EPW, 6 April, 1991.

104. Shikha Bose, "Basu's Bid to Rein in the Trade Unions," TOI, 19 May, 1992.

105. Ramaswamy, Worker Consciousness, 188-189, 194.

106. It is difficult to draw any major conclusions from the figures, however, because the 1984 figures are not available for Tamil Nadu and the 1978 figures for Maharashtra I have therefore had to use 1984 figures for Maharashtra and West Bengal, and 1978 figures for Tamil Nadu.

107. Biren Roy, "Minimum Wages, a Dead Letter," EPW, 12 July, 1986.

108. "Dubious Honour," EPW, 2 February, 1991.

109. Ramaswamy, Worker Consciousness, 71.

110. Ibid., 91-92.

111. Basu, in "West Bengal CITU Conference", reports that CITU has entered into a number of agreements with multinationals wherein a productivity-linked bonus was cheered as a victory, but does not go on to give more details, and I have found none elsewhere.

112. Ramaswamy, Worker Consciousness, 190

113. Ibid., 93-94.

114. Ibid., 199

115. "Industrial Morass," EPW, 1 March, 1980.

116 Chatterjee, Industrial Relations, 287.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

The intent of this study was to examine the nature of the relationship between the state and labour in the three Indian states of Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. Its particular concern was to identify the role played by the very different political parties in power in each of the states in mediating the nature of this relationship. I had hypothesised that, within the constraints of an overall capitalist democratic federal framework, the party in power at the regional level — often representing different ideologies and class coalitions — can, and does, develop different relationships between the state and organised labour. I had further hypothesised that such relationships are also dependent on the nature of the industries, and the strength of the labour movement in that region, prior to the period under study The period under study begins in the mid-1960s — when the first Left Front government came to power in West Bengal, the DMK government in Tamil Nadu, and the Congress experienced new challenges in Maharashtra — and continues up till the beginning of the 1990s, although much of my statistical data ends in the mid-1980s.

In order to test my hypothesis, I proceeded as follows. In Chapter II, I laid out the background shared by the three states, in terms of labour legislation (most of which was federal), the nature of industrialisation in the country, and the history and character of the Indian trade union movement. The chapter also served as a review of the Indian literature on labour, in which I surveyed how the variables central to my study had been understood and explained by other analysts.

In Chapter III, I fleshed out the independent variables for each of the states — party regime, industrial profile, and character of workers' organisation prior to the period under study I concluded that the most significant difference between the three states was in respect of the variable of party regime, although some difference did exist as well in their industrial profiles

Chapter IV looked at the outcomes of the independent variables — state-labour relationship patterns, and conditions for labour. In terms of the relationship between state and labour in each state, no definitive patterns could be established, although some trends did emerge The state under the Congress (I) in Maharashtra was relatively non-interventionist, although it had used its coercive apparatus against workers frequently if called upon to do so

by industrialists. The DMK/AIDMK in Tamil Nadu was similar and, after an initial unsuccessful attempt to establish affiliate unions in key industries, intervened only occasionally and in an entirely cosmetic manner, except to deploy the police or preventive detention laws against workers at the behest of industrialists. The West Bengal state under the CPI(M) played the most interventionist role, involving itself constantly to settle labour disputes. Although initially unwilling to exert force against striking workers, it was wary of repeating the experience of labour unrest under the first United Left Front government in 1967-68, which had alienated industrialists and caused much capital flight, and it had therefore become increasingly concerned to control labour.

The variations between party regimes in the extent of their involvement with labour, can be explained by referring to the social bases and ideologies of each, outlined in Chapter III. The Congress (I) drew leadership largely from a landowning Maratha peasantry, and received support from the urban bourgeoisie, so that its reliance on urban workers was minimal. The DMK/AIDMK drew its elites from an urban and rural petit bourgeoisie, but it used the rhetoric of linguistic and regional nationalism to unite all classes. While willing to make some welfare concessions to workers as part of the "poor", it had no specific class analysis and even aligned itself openly with management in industrial disputes. Even though its leaders came from the urban, upper-caste, middle-class, the CPI(M) in West Bengal, alone of the three party regimes, used an ideology of class conflict, and appealed to industrial workers as an important constituency.

The workers appeared to have fared the best in Maharashtra, with workers in some industries receiving the highest wages and benefits in the country, and with militant, shop-floor based and independent unions emerging. West Bengal workers, too, fared well in terms of wages, but lacked the benefits granted to Bombay workers. However, they had also been spared the higher workloads taken on by the Bombay workers in exchange for these benefits. Workers' organisations in Calcutta remained party-dominated, with no significant worker leaders having emerged. They had, in addition, been forced into a position of moderation, with managements having taken the offensive. Madras workers seemed to have fared the worst—their wages were the lowest of the three cities, they had been forced to accept higher workloads in return for benefits, and their organisations remained dependent on outsiders who remained unconcerned about shop-floor issues. However, when employment figures are

examined, the steady rise in factory employment in Tamil Nadu over the last twenty years challenges the negative age of it that emerges from a comparison of the other indices. In West Bengal, while workers had benefitted initially in terms of having a government responsive to their demands, they were increasingly experiencing a feeling of being let-down as the government attempted to discipline them in order to attract industry

Employment figures for each state suggest the importance of party regime in attracting industry to the state The unwillingness of capitalists to invest in a state governed by a party opposed to them in theory was reflected in the declining employment figures for West Bengal. In 1966, before the DMK and the first United Left Front government came to power, West Bengal had more than twice Tamil Nadu's factory employment (Table 8); in 1984, Tamil Nadu had almost drawn abreast with West Bengal In 1966, Maharashtra's factory employment was only 7 21% higher than West Bengal's By 1984, when the Left Front government had been in power in West Bengal for nearly 7 years, Maharashtra's employment was higher by 28.5%.

A key causal factor in these different outcomes seems to be the nature of industry. Yet the nature of industry is a broad term that refers to a number of aspects, such as its position in the economy, both national and international, the type of ownership, the labour component in its production cost, and management techniques. An obvious point is that the situation of workers varied greatly within each state depending on the industry they were employed in. Thus beedi workers in Bombay cannot be compared to Philips workers in Pune, and any state level statistics that average their conditions is bound to be deceptive. Comparisons between states that do not keep this in mind will tend to be fallacious.

Workers in all three states were most embattled in industries that were once dominant but were faced with decline in either international or national demand, and were therefore seeking to restructure, while being unwilling to reinvest. This was the case in the jute industry in Calcutta, and in the cotton textile industries in Bombay and Madras. To the extent that the firms in Madras and Calcutta are becoming increasingly uncompetitive, while Bombay continues to attract the most dynamic firms, including multinationals, conditions for workers are most likely to be favourable in Bombay, with managements less on the offensive.

To some extent, workers in all three states are faced with similar industrial strategies, as more and more plants are trying to rationalise, mechanise, and reduce the component of permanent labour, this being the component which they can control the least and which is

likely to cause them the most trouble. Few unions anywhere have begun to comprehend the long-term impact of rationalisation strategy in terms of employment opportunities

The nature of the industry dictates the type of workers required Thus the electronics industries in Pune require better-educated, skilled workers capable of using their own discretion to get a job done, and this has led to the rise of confident, self-assertive worker activists, willing to challenge management on its own ground, and to resist manipulation by outside parties. Conversely, while the jute industry in Calcutta also requires a degree of skill, this skill is not easily transferable and has little general demand, so that it does not provide a basis on which to hold managements to ransom In so far as Maharashtra attracts more technologically advanced industry, it is likely to have more assertive organised workers

Banaji and Hensman have systematically adduced a vast amount of information comparing multinationals and Indian owned and managed firms in the Bombay area They conclude that it is not the nature of the industry so much as the nature of the management that conditions industrial relations at the plant level Management in multinational companies displayed a willingness to deal with unions in contrast to the widespread hostility displayed by Indian employers. This was certainly corroborated by some of the cases I described, for instance, Philips versus BMOA. However, even Banaji and Hensman were quick to qualify their conclusion, noting that it varied between firms within each type of ownership, and much depended on the present management in any situation. Thus, for instance, the new management at Philips was less willing to tolerate Hadke than the earlier ones had been, and conversely the new management at Telco was more open to a speedy settlement than the earlier one had been.

Although the nature of industry is obviously an important factor in determining outcomes for workers, it does not completely explain the differences that have emerged within each state under study, especially given that a number of aspects of the industrial structure are common to the three states. The experience and character of the pre-1960s labour organising has little to offer in this regard, with all three states having a similar history of militancy in the early stages, tempered by moderate and legalistic trade union federations and outside leaders in the 1950s and 1960s The nature of the party in power does seem, then, to have a significant role to play

The interventionist role of the West Bengal government and the relatively non-

interventionist roles of the Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu governments are dictated by their ideological commitments and class character. However, as pointed out by Ramaswamy in Power and Justice, one cannot make any generic statements about the state and labour, but only between the state and some sections of labour. Governments have reacted differently in disputes in which the union affiliated to their party is involved, as opposed to disputes where other unions are involved. Thus the Congress government in Maharashtra is more willing to refer disputes to conciliation if they are brought by an INTUC union, whereas it will often refuse to do this for another union The case is similar under the DMK/AIADMK in Tamil Nadu, and in West Bengal, where the CPI(M) government and CITU have developed a corporatist relationship, with the government being far more willing to support actions led by CITU than by any other union

Because of the strong ideological and organisational links between CPI(M) and CITU, CITU has come to dominate the union scene in Calcutta, while political support for the DMK/AIADMK or Congress has not necessarily led to the dominance of their trade union affiliates in their respective states

Predictably, perhaps, being affiliated to the ruling party was found to moderate a union's stand, whether it be a DMK union or INTUC or CITU. However, this can take varying forms in each state, and have different consequences. Unlike in Maharashtra where, while INTUC has shown a lack of militancy and unwillingness to challenge the government, it has had to win some concessions for labour through accommodative means, as the workers form an important constituency, the DMK/AIADMK dependence on a rural and small business constituency has freed it from such pressures. But, even in Maharashtra, because the Congress did not come to power as a workers' party, either in terms of membership or ideology, worker support or lack of it for INTUC does not necessarily have electoral consequences for the Congress In West Bengal, on the other hand, dissatisfaction with CITU does more readily translate into dissatisfaction with the government, which had created certain expectations when it came to power as a Left party with special concern for workers This is changing somewhat, with the CPI(M) turning increasingly to the countryside for its support, so that the dissatisfaction of urban workers is becoming relatively irrelevant to its electoral calculations. In general it appears that, while being affiliated to the ruling party may have some benefits for a union, it also has to suffer the consequences of moderation, and can often push for, and get,

less than can other unions not inhibited by the need to be responsible

The nature of the party regime can, to an extent, influence the nature of industry in the state, with some of the industrialists' unwillingness to invest in West Bengal having to do with their experience under the first UF government, as well as their fear of a government favourably inclined towards workers

The nature of the party regime has also determined the role played by the central government in that state. This, too, can determine the extent of industrial development in a state, with the central government being more willing to provide infrastructural incentives to a state ruled by an ally rather than a rival This partisanship is expressed in other areas as well; for instance, while the MRTUPULP Act in Maharashtra that provided for the recognition of a representative union was finally cleared by the central government, a similar Bill in West Bengal was denied Presidential assent.

The fact that the government at the Centre can act in a partisan fashion, in accordance with its relations with the party in the state, brings one up against the limits of government power at the state level. The limits go beyond the tendency of the Central government to act in a partisan manner, and have to do instead with the nature of Central policy decisions. They become especially clear in the context of the strongly centralising tendencies of the Indian federation, and the commitment of the national government to a capitalist but government dominated economy. Thus, the central government refused to take over the failing Binny mills, or the "sick" mills in Bombay, regardless of the consequences for their employees Similarly, the central government's fear that it would have to raise wages in all its cotton textile mills controlled by the National Textile Corporation if the Bombay workers won an increase in scales, is reported to have been influential in BMO/ 's refusal to concede such an increase. Even more importantly, central government policy can be seen to have played a major role in creating the situation of the "sick" mills in the first place Infrastructural development was adopted as the priority in the first three Five Year Plans Hence, investment and thus technological change in the consumer goods industry, especially textiles, was forestalled. The growth of the mill sector was curbed by state discrimination in favour of handloom and power loom units which were more labour intensive The latter were given subsidies while excise duties were imposed on mill output This rendered a number of mills uncompetitive.

It would seem, then, that the hypothesis with which I began this study — that party regimes have an important role to play in mediating the relationship between the state and labour — has been validated. However, my expectation that a more sympathetic and interventionist regime, such as that of the CPI(M) in West Bengal, was likely to have superior consequences for workers, has not been confirmed. The study has shown conclusively the importance of the nature of industry in determining conditions for labour. It may thus be possible to conclude that the party in power influences conditions for workers as much through policies not aimed specifically at them, as through intervention in industrial relations.

Table 1 - Estimated Employment in Public and Private Sector Industry (in '000s), All India

Year	Private Sector		Public Sector	Total
	large establishment	small establishment		
1960-61	5 040 0	-		12 090 0
1965-66	6 105 7	707 4	9 378 8	16 191 9
1970-71	6 035 0	725 6	10 730 8	17 491 4
1975-76	6 112 6	731 0	13 321 6	20 165 2
1980-81	6 599 9	795 5	15 483 8	22 879 2
1983-84	6 525 7	819 0	16 868 8	24 213 5
1984-85	6 478 7	830 8	17 269 0	24 578 5
1985-86	6 547 4	825 5	17 683 3	25 056 2
1986-87	6 532 3	831 3	18 024 6	25 388 2
1987-88	6 575 5	846 7	18 326 1	25 748 3

Table 2 - Number and Membership of Registered Trade Unions* All India

Year	Number of Unions	Membership ('000s)
1950-51	3 766	2 270
1955-56	8 095	4 000
1960-61	11 312	4 369
1966	14 686	5 431
1976	22 484	6 468
1981*	37 539	5 377
1983*	38 935	5 399
1984*	42 609	5 136
1985*	45 067	6 414

*these figures are incomplete and provisional

Source: Central Statistical Organization, Indian Statistical Abstracts, New Delhi CSO, various years.

Table 3 - Industrial Disputes: All India

Year	Number of Disputes	Number of Workers Involved	Number of Person-Days Lost
1961	1 357	511 860	4 918 755
1966	2 556	1 410 056	13 846 329
1971	2 752	1 615 140	16 545 636
1976	1 459	736 974	12 745 735
1981	2 589	1 588 004	36 583 564
1984	2 094	1 949 029	56 025 240
1985	1 755	1 078 801	29 239 466
1986	1 892	1 644 882	32 748 228

Source: Central Statistical Organization, Indian Statistical Abstracts, New Delhi: CSO, various years.

Table 4 - Number of Workers Employed in Industry: 1901-1931

Year	Bombay		Madras		Bengal		All India	
	total	% change	total	% change	total	% change	total	% change
1901	1,365,882	-	2,398,225	-	1,491,971	-	1,7425,234	-
1911	1,601,047	+17 28	2,682,866	+11 87	1,675,582	+12 34	18,115,230	+3 9
1921	1,463,367	-8 60	2,219,497	-17 27	1,674,290	-0 08	15,698,373	-13 3
1931	1,138,951	-22 17	2,288,006	+3 09	1,281,808	-23 44	15,725,424	+0 1

Table 5 - Industrial Working Force in Some Major Industries, 1901-1931

Industry	Bombay			Madras			Bengal		
	1921	1931	% change	1921	1931	% change	1921	1931	% change
Textile	536,351	447,338	-16 6	529,487	653,693	+23 4	540,137	457,622	15 27
Wood	157,266	122 008	-22 42	207,496	281,028	+35 4	168,593	140,112	16 89
Metal	65,592	43,901	-33 1	63,636	83,881	+31 8	75,783	50,716	-33 18
Ceramic	93,080	68,535	-25 3	105,136	113,894	+8 3	147,512	79,224	-46 29
Chemical Products	25,577	25,745	+0 66	20,835	42,032	+109 4	56,755	38,270	34 39
Food	75,920	38,339	-62 67	232,998	252,668	+8 4	238,885	179,023	24 87
Dress & Toilet	237,441	210,010	-11 55	565,848	582,726	+4 7	212,730	172,449	40 71
Building	112,926	69,164	-38 75	277,472	137,328	38 75	91,754	54,402	40 71

Source: R.Chattopadhyay, "Trends of Industrialization in Bengal, 1901-1931", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 29 August 1981.

Table 6 - Import of Machinery into Bombay, Madras and Bengal Presidencies: 1901 - 1931

Value of Machinery Imported (millions of Rs.)

Year	Bombay	Madras	Bengal
1926-27	45 9	16 4	44 4
1927-28	43 1	18 1	57.5
1928-29	52 2	23 6	75 2
1929-30	52 3	24 3	72 3
1930-31	39 9	20 5	55 9
1931-32	35 8	13 5	33 1
1932-33	36 7	10 8	40.1
1933-34	42 2	14 5	45 4
1934-35	42 7	15 9	46.5
1935-36	40 0	16 7	59.3

Source: R.Chattopadhyay, "Trends of Industrialization in Bengal, 1901-1931", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 29 August 1981.

Table 7 - Estimated Employment in Public and Private Sector Industry, by State

(in '000s)

Maharashtra

Year	Public Sector					Private Sector		Grand Total
	central govt	state govt	quasi govt central	quasi govt state	local bodies	large estab	small estab	
1987-88	486 6	486 9	406 2	244 7	572 0	1278 0	75 1	3549 5
1984-85	489 7	418 4	338 1	199 7	504 1	1342 6	70 2	3362 8
1978-79	470 6	773 2	311 1	154 2	483 4	1238 7	61 9	3493 1
1972 73	437 9	443 5	284 8		429 5	1151 2	63 7	2810 6
1967-68	408 3	355 8	172 5		369 1			1306 3

Tamil Nadu

Year	Public Sector					Private Sector		Grand Total
	central govt	state govt	quasi govt central	quasi govt state	local bodies	large estab	small estab	
1987-88	247 2	574 9	180 4	353 8	158 1	554 3	128 8	2197 4
1984-85	239 5	491 0	150 3	291 6	98 8	566 0	145 6	1983 3
1978-79	228 5	367 6	129 2	247 0	205 0	548 4	96 9	1822 25
1972-73	202 0	356 3	199 3		200 8	539 7	108 3	1606 4
1967-68	197 7	309 7	131 1		187 7			826 2

West Bengal

Year	Public Sector					Private Sector		Grand Total
	central govt	state govt	quasi govt central	quasi govt state	local bodies	large estab	small estab	
1987-88	417 9	315 4	557 1	156 3	146 6	898 0	30 4	2521 7
1984-85	437 2	306 5	497 5	167 4	111 5	962 7	29 7	2512 5
1978-79	419 9	300 0	459 1	164 3	107 3	1045 9	30 4	2526 4
1972-73	412 5	282 6	358 5		104 9	1196 7	27 1	2382 3
1967-68	423 8	253 9	258 1		105 0			1040 8

Source: Central Statistical Organization, Indian Statistical Abstracts, New Delhi CSO, various years

Table 8 - Factory Employment by State (in '000s)

Year	Maharashtra	Tamil Nadu	West Bengal
1951	768	418	655
1956	1052	308	682
1961	827	330	739
1966	937	405	873
1971	1050	460	839
1976	1106	536	865
1980	1235	643	905
1981	1254	759	925
1982	1159	790	911
1983	1197	801	921
1984	1181	907	919

Source Central Statistical Organization, Indian Statistical Abstracts, New Delhi: CSO, various years.

Table 9 - Employment in Factories According to Age and Sex, by State

State	No Factories Submitting Returns	Daily Average Number of Workers						Total
		adults		adoles cents		children		
		male	female	male	female	male	female	
1983 (from 1989 abstracts)								
Maha'tra	14,279	943 599	61,544	1,379	52	34	33	1,006,651
Tam Nadu	9,653	604,956	120,625	1,511	5,080	668	2,176	735,016
W Bengal	2,855	521,613	12,711	635	4	8	11	534,982
1978 (from 1982 abstracts)								
Maha'tra	11,003	1,002,266	66,391	608	154	98	31	1,069,548
Tam Nadu	7,078	444,047	87,926	720	3,358	860	1,759	538,670
W Bengal	3,764	660,576	17,988	678	7	8	-	679,257
1973 (from 1975 abstracts)								
Maha'tra	8,965	933,646	69,656	512	129	45	23	1,004,011
Tam Nadu	5,842	372,313	76,777	1 002	3,217	546	2,589	456,444
W Bengal	3,590	672,361	18,488	266	7	12	-	691,134
1967 (from 1970 abstracts)								
Maha'tra	7,370	788,779	65,977	652	113	106	37	855,664
Tam Nadu	6,500	347,404	49,128	632	1,296	429	666	399,555
W Bengal	3,874	724,626	21,202	4,468	22	104	38	747,460

Source: Central Statistical Organization, Indian Statistical Abstracts, New Delhi CSO, various years

Table 10 - Employment by Industry and by State

(ranking in each state)

Industry	Maha rashtra			Tamil Nadu			West Bengal		
	1972	1978	1983	1972	1978	1983	1972	1978	1983
cotton textiles	285,597 (1)	294,275 (1)	228,734 (1)	124,335 (1)	139,142 (1)	168,699 (1)	48,679 (6)	54,343 (6)	55,096 (5)
chemicals (exc coal & petroleum)	105,328 (2)	129,896 (2)	129,878 (2)	35,058 (4)	61,680 (3)	82,048 (3)	32,044 (10)	34,258 (9)	37,177 (9)
machinery & machine tools (exc elect.)	78 059 (3)	94,468 (3)	111 986 (3)	34 896 (5)	46,415 (5)	53,860 (6)	51,567 (5)	56,077 (4)	55,998 (4)
food products	58 026 (6)	78,319 (4)	95,350 (4)	77,274 (2)	88,764 (2)	121,647 (2)	54,930 (4)	55,673 (5)	53,597 (6)
transport equip & parts	58,099 (5)	77,304 (5)	91,405 (5)	46,015 (3)	58,250 (4)	69,481 (4)	57,440 (3)	65,500 (3)	67,634 (3)
base metals & alloys	39,700 (10)	58,983 (6)	71,257 (6)	18,426 (8)	24,390 (8)	33,705 (7)	105,726 (2)	105,738 (2)	127,597 (2)
elect machinery appliances, parts	58 528 (4)	57 396 (7)	66,235 (7)	(10)	(9)	(13)	31,906 (11)	31,665 (11)	35,623 (10)
metal products (exc machinery & trans equip.)	54,145 (7)	55,791 (8)	60,995 (8)	(13)	(13)	(12)	41,598 (7)	40,163 (8)	41,466 (8)
paper, printing & publishing	49,456 (9)	49,628 (10)	54,410 (9)	22,018 (7)	24,685 (7)	32,519 (8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
rubber, plastic, petroleum & coal products	35,409 (12)	39,319 (11)	45,728 (10)	(11)	(12)	(14)	(12)	(13)	(12)
repair services	(14)	(13)	(12)	26,470 (6)	29,883 (6)	59,917 (5)	41,468 (8)	42,355 (7)	43,430 (7)
leather & fur				11,109 (12)	14,142 (14)	27,383 (9)	-	-	-
non metallic minerals	(11)	(12)	(13)	15,030 (9)	18,466 (10)	26,630 (10)	(13)	(12)	(13)
jute, hemp & mesta textiles		-			-		246,446 (1)	235,286 (1)	240,668 (1)

Source: Central Statistical Organization, Indian Statistical Abstracts, New Delhi CSO, various years

Table 11 - Average Annual Per Capita Earnings of Factory Employees by Industry (in Rs.)

Industry	1971	1976	1981	1983	1984	1985
cotton textiles	2 799	5 041	7 560	8 643	8 715	6 126
wool, silk, synthetic textiles	2 899	4 682	7 622	9 762	10 336	10 337
jute, hemp, mesta textiles	2 776	4 768	7 471	8 180	8 974	12 139
textile products (exc footwear)	2 485	4 231	5 775	6 065	7 955	5 302
wood, wood products, furniture	1 849	2 499	4 325	5 478	6 137	6 551
paper, printing, publishing	2 873	5 204	7 723	5 822	9 770	10 691
leather, fur	2 852	4 446	6 541	5 816	6 536	6 102
rubber, plastic, coal, petroleum	2 554	4 873	6 608	5 451	9 480	9 378
chemicals & products (exc coal & petroleum)	2 899	4 287	7 606	9 474	10 266	8 854
non-metallic minerals	1 880	3 406	5 316	7 044	7 313	8 027
base metals & alloys	3 165	6 378	7 496	9 499	8 882	10 000
metal products (exc machinery & trans equip)	2 575	4 46	6 643	8 480	9 528	9 083
machinery, machine tools, (exc electr machinery)	2 795	5 704	7 962	10 254	11 204	12 342
electrical machinery, appliances, supplies	3 076	6 096	7 738	9 014	6 320	10 225
transport equipment & parts	3 496	6 559	9 231	10 450	11 819	13 547
other manufacturing industries	3 006	4 870	6 939	8 223	8 941	9 956
repair services	2 995	5 776	7 458	8 571	13 151	13 645

Source: Central Statistical Organization, Indian Statistical Abstracts, New Delhi CSO, various years

Table 12 - Number of Registered Workers' Unions (Central and State)

Year		Maha rashtra		Tamil Nadu		West Bengal	
		central	state	central	state	central	state
1983	on register	388	3 042	709	2 947	145 (e)	7 298 (e)
	submitting returns	289	1 654	502	1 837	-	-
1978	on register	324	3 055	408	2 347	128 (e)	6 979 (e)
	submitting returns	222	1 267	310	1 521	-	-
1973	on register	108	2 897	190	2 194	186 (e)	5 005 (e)
	submitting returns	44	1 052	18	1 534	-	-
1968	on register	49	2 043	117	1 535	144	3 331
	submitting returns	28	1 180	86	1 054	2	859

e = estimated

Source: Central Statistical Organization, Indian Statistical Abstracts, New Delhi: CSO, various years

Table 13 - Industrial Disputes by State

Year	Maharashtra			Tamil Nadu			West Bengal		
	no of disputes	no of workers involved ('000s)	no of person-days lost ('000s)	no of disputes	no of workers involved ('000s)	no of person days lost ('000s)	no of disputes	no of workers involved ('000s)	no of person days lost ('000s)
1986	244	44 9	3 436	272	161 2	3 591	188	266 2	8 554
1985	211	54 6	4 413	216	248 8	3 599	210	262 8	11 393
1984	244	130 1	7 491	218	131 8	4 142	209	541 2	30 285
1983	282	239 1	17 440	242	96 5	2 217	269	336 8	15 591
1982	288	261 7	45 279	208	85 7	1 999	240	275 0	16 133
1981	310	169 2	4 090	297	191 1	4 155	245	347 8	9 639
1979	300	267 3	2 977	342	294 1	8 405	401	833 5	18 064
1978	318	288 5	3 716	394	216 1	2 365	549	416 8	12 045
1977	541	498 2	2 841	323	287 3	2 912	483	293 6	8 821
1976	350	166 2	564	219	127 5	1 072	321	255 1	9 159
1975	484	144 6	1 362	229	193 1	1 663	309	415 7	13 812
1972	881	435 7	3 611	411	274 3	4 494	353	238 2	4 159
1971	717	465 0	2 178	325	132 7	1 903	316	250 5	4 445
1970	533	208 8	1 433	199	133 3	1 195	408	509 2	11 504
1968	676	284 8	1 674	264	160 9	2 382	480	364 6	6 567
1967	614	292 2	1 900	137	94 7	478	381	172 4	3 985
1966	742	519 2	3 626	182	89 5	621	269	186 7	3 214
1965	540	192 3	904	139	48 0	376	218	153 4	1 829

Source: Central Statistical Organization, Indian Statistical Abstracts, New Delhi: CSO, various years.

Table 14 - Strikes and Lockouts in West Bengal

Year	Strikes			Lockouts		
	no of cases	no of persons involved	no of person-days lost	no of cases	no of persons involved	no of person-days lost
1975	111 (40 1)	306,102 (82 7)	10,785,261 (79 4)	166 (59 9)	64,151 (17 3)	2,796,903 (20 6)
1976	129 (45 9)	85,956 (38 0)	951,967 (11 2)	152 (54 1)	140,138 (62 0)	7,522,573 (88 8)
1977	206 (51 9)	115,290 (45 8)	1,072,149 (12 0)	191 (48 1)	136,354 (54 2)	7,839,155 (88 0)
1978	172 (46 4)	156,367 (61 4)	5,118,472 (42 7)	199 (53 6)	98,198 (38 6)	6,855,378 (57 3)
1979	146 (50 3)	384,515 (88 6)	15,540,055 (84 3)	144 (49 7)	49,310 (11 4)	2,899,604 (15 7)
1980	78 (37 5)	68,411 (44 5)	1,485,399 (24 0)	130 (62 5)	85,358 (55 5)	4,695,657 (76 0)
1981	43 (26 9)	16,952 (10 6)	620,118 (5 9)	117 (73 1)	142,735 (89 4)	9,902,938 (94 1)
1982	29 (19 9)	8,114 (6 2)	309 292 (2 0)	117 (80 1)	122,738 (93 8)	15,479,317 (98 0)
1983	39 (22 3)	12,014 (9 6)	563,946 (3 8)	136 (77 7)	112,695 (90 4)	14,320,267 (96 2)
1984	49 (26 6)	286,460 (78 5)	21,596,573 (73 8)	135 (73 4)	78,409 (21 5)	7,658,324 (26 2)
1985	39 (19 1)	13,527 (9 1)	197,215 (1 3)	165 (90 9)	135,885 (90 9)	15,112,029 (98 7)
1986	29 (14 0)	23,104 (15 1)	265,934 (2 0)	178 (86 0)	129,681 (84 9)	13,272,755 (97 6)
1987	39 (16 9)	93,154 (36 5)	1,637,211 (6 8)	192 (83 1)	162,287 (63 5)	22,374,900 (93 2)

Notes 1 Figures in parentheses indicates % of total

2 Lockout is inclusive of cases of strike followed by lockout

Sources B.Roy, "Appeasement of Employers Fails to Pay", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 18 June 1988.

B Roy, "Working Class on the Defensive", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 4 September 1982

Table 15 - Industrial Disputes Referred to Conciliation and Adjudication, by State

	Maharashtra			Tamil Nadu			West Bengal		
	1984	1978	1973	1984	1978	1972	1984	1978	1973
referred to Ind Relat'ns machinery	7 277	-	5 579	-	8 201	7 450	9 889[1]	10 669	11 983
failed at conciliation	2 494	-	1 728		1 484	666	415[2]	628	518
referred for adjudication	1 847	-	1 643		722	274	710	479	342
referred for arbitration	12	-	4		31	23			
adjudication in favour of workers	1 109	-	957	-	211	1	349[3]	1[illegible]	26
adjudication against workers	732		296	-	128	-	178	-	3

[1]Includes 4731 cases brought over from 1986

[2]Includes 36 cases not recognized for adjudication

[3]This figure and that for the adjudications given against workers in the next row exclude awards of 'no dispute' or 'compromise', which together numbered 148

Source: Indian Labour Institute, Handbook of Labour Statistics, Simla: II I, various years

Table 16 - Average Annual Per Capita Earnings of Factory Workers (in Rs), by State

Year	Maharashtra	Tamil Nadu	West Bengal
1961	1 775	1 465	1 410
1966	2 480	2 032	2 024
1971	3 090	2 670	3 028
1976	5 680	4 817	5 840
1978	7 210	5 388	6 970
1980	7 190	6 451	7 977
1981	8 762	6 907	8 149
1983	8 376	7 840	10 545
1984	10 673	9 627	11 606
1985	12 730	9 482	12 093

Source: Central Statistical Organization, Indian Statistical Abstracts, New Delhi: CSO, various years.

Table 17 - Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers

(1960 = 100)

Year	Bombay	Maha-rashtra	Madras	Tamil Nadu	Calcutta	West Bengal
1970-71	182	182	170	171	182	181
1971-72	190	-	182	-	187	-
1972-73	203	-	203	-	197	-
1973-74	233	-	229	-	228	-
1974-75	289	-	301	-	288	-
1975-76	300	-	314	-	287	-
1976-77	298	-	288	-	297	-
1977-78	318	-	311	-	320	-
1978-79	325	-	318	-	331	-
1979-80	359	-	350	-	351	-
1980-81	400	390	388	395	382	373
1981-82	460	456	446	453	414	406
1982-83	502	497	475	480	447	439
1983-84	564	550	550	563	511	488
1984-85	609	598	576	608	576	537
1985-86	654	634	630	639	610	572
1986-87	717	688	681	687	671	627
1987-88	719	747	756	746	714	667

Source: Central Statistical Organization, Indian Statistical Abstracts, New Delhi CSO, various years.

Table 18 - Rate of Industrial Injuries in Factories, by State

(per 1000 workers employed)

Year	Maha rashtra		Tamil Nadu		West Bengal	
	fatal	non-fatal	fatal	non-fatal	fatal	non-fatal
1972	0 12	59 79	0.08	59 91	0.10	105.06
1973	0 12	58.66	-	-	0 14	107 64
1976	0 18	68.15	0 07	52 39	0 13	94 23
1977	0 12	76.07	0.06	55.33	0.09	109.62
1982	0 14	77.15	0.08	39.06	0.07	108.56
1983	0.15	76.99	0.06	28.31	0.12	106.48

Source: Central Statistical Organization, Indian Statistical Abstracts, New Delhi: CSO, various years.

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