

XII. The Labor and Socialist Movement

"The Indian proletariat has already matured sufficiently to wage a class-conscious and political mass struggle—and that being the case, Anglo-Russian methods in India are played out."—Lenin in 1908.

I. THE GROWTH AND CONDITIONS OF THE WORKING CLASS

The industrial working class in India, in the modern sense, is not numerically large in relation to the population; but it is

concentrated in the decisive centers, and is the most coherent, advanced, resolute and basically revolutionary section of the population.

There are no adequate statistics of the extent of the Indian working class. The 1931 Census Report records:

"The number of workers employed in organized labor is extraordinarily low for a population the size of India's, and the daily average number of hands employed by establishments in British India to which the Factories Act applies is only 1,553,169.

"The total India figures for persons employed in plantations, mines, industry and transport in 1921 was 24,239,555, of whom only 2,685,909 were employed in organized establishments employing 10 or more employees.

"The total figure under the same heads in 1931 amounts to 26,187,689; and if labor in similar establishments is in the same proportion, it will now number 2,901,776. Figures of the daily average of persons employed indicate that it has increased during the last decade at the rate of about 30 per cent, in which case it would now number 3,500,000. Probably 5,000,000 may be fairly taken as the figure of organized labor in India in 1931." (Census of India, 1931, Vol. I, Part I, p. 285.)

In the broadest sense, the number of wage-workers in India may be estimated at about 60 millions. The returns of the Indian Franchise Committee showed 56½ millions for 1931.

"The total number of agricultural laborers, which was given at 21.5 million in 1921, was shown by the census of 1931 to be over 31.5 million, of whom 23 million were estimated by the Indian Franchise Committee in 1931 to be 'landless,' while the total number of non-agricultural laborers, as estimated by the Indian Franchise Committee, was 25 million. There are, therefore, about 56.5 million wage laborers out of 154 million persons in all occupations in the whole of India, or in other words, over 36 per cent of the people in all occupations depend upon wage labor as a means of livelihood." (I.L.O. Report, 1938, *Industrial Labor in India*, p. 30.)

In the narrower sense, the industrial proletariat in modern or other than petty industry according to the Industrial Census of 1921 reached a total of 2.6 millions in establishments employing ten or more workers. There has been no later Industrial Census; but the estimate of the 1931 Census, given above, would place the total at about 3½ millions. The only exact records are those of the Factories Act administration; the latest 1934 Factories Act covers power-driven factories employing twenty or more, or, in some cases, ten or more, workers; the total in 1935 was 1,610,932 workers. To these should be added 245,000 workers returned as employed in "large industrial establishments" in the Indian States, giving a full total of 1,855,000 workers in modern large-scale industry in India.

Taking this as a basis, we reach the following:

Factory workers in medium and larger factories (on the above basis)	1,855,000
Miners	371,000
Railwaymen	636,000
Water Transport (Dockers, Seamen)	361,000
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Total of above groups	3,223,000

These 3¼ million represent the kernel of the industrial proletariat in modern large-scale industry in India today. Excluded from this are all the workers in petty industry (establishments with less than ten workers), as well as in larger enterprises without power-driven machinery (*e.g.*, cigarette-making, with, in some cases, over fifty workers). From the standpoint of the potential strength of the organized labor movement, we should add the over 1 million workers employed on the plantations, who are employed in fully large-scale enterprise under the most scientific slave-driving conditions, and have already shown a high degree of militant activity in periods of unrest, although so far cut off from all organization and held under conditions of complete isolation and subjection; and a proportion of the workers in petty industry and in the larger unregulated enterprises. The immediate effective organizable strength of the Indian working class should therefore certainly represent over 5 million workers.

Of the conditions of the industrial working class in India some general picture has been given in Chapter IV. It may be useful to

recall the conclusions reached by the British Trades Union Congress delegation to India which reported in 1928:

"All inquiries go to show that the vast majority of workers in India do not receive more than about 1s. per day. In the province of Bengal, which includes the largest mass of industrial workers, investigators declared that as far as they could ascertain, 60 per cent of workers were in receipt of wages of not more than 1s. 2d. a day in the highest instance, scaling down to as low as 7d. to 9d. for men and 3d. to 7d. in the case of children and women. . . . Our own inquiries support these figures and, as a matter of fact, many cases have been quoted to us of daily rates in operation which descend to 3¼d. for women and 7d. or even less for men." (A. A. Purcell and J. Hallsworth, *Report on Labor Conditions in India*, Trades Union Congress, 1928, p. 10.)

The same delegation reported with regard to the housing of the workers:

"We visited the workers' quarters wherever we stayed, and had we not seen them we could not have believed that such evil places existed. . . . Here is a group of houses in 'lines,' the owner of which charges the tenant of each dwelling 4s. 6d. a month as rent. Each house, consisting of one dark room used for all purposes, living, cooking and sleeping, is 9 feet by 9 feet, with mud walls and loose-tiled roof, and has a small open compound in front, a corner of which is used as a latrine. There is no ventilation in the living-room except by a broken roof or that obtained through the entrance door when open. Outside the dwelling is a long narrow channel which receives the waste matter of all descriptions and where flies and other insects abound. . . . Outside all the houses on the edge of each side of the strip of land between the 'lines' are the exposed gulleys, at some places stopped up with garbage, refuse and other waste matter, giving forth horrible smells repellent in the extreme. It is obvious that these gulleys are often used as conveniences, especially by children. . . .

"The overcrowding and insanitary conditions almost everywhere prevailing demonstrate the callousness and

wanton neglect of their obvious duties by the authorities concerned." (*Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.)

The conditions of the plantation workers reach the lowest levels. "In the Assam Valley tea-gardens (Assam and Bengal produce by far the greater bulk of the tea in India) the average monthly earnings of men workers settled in the gardens are about Rs. 7-13-0, of women and children about Rs. 5-14-0 and Rs. 4-4-0 respectively" (Shiva Rao, *The Industrial Worker in India*, 1939, p. 128). This is equivalent to 2s. 8d. a week for men, 2s. a week for women and 1s. 5½d. for children. The addition of free "housing," medical treatment and other concessions only emphasizes the slave conditions. In the Surma Valley the rates are still lower. In the South India plantations the rates have been lowered to 4 to 5 annas (4½d. to 5½d.) a day for men and less than 3 annas (3½d.) for women.

The fantastic profits extracted on the basis of this rate of exploitation are notorious, and reached the most colossal heights in the boom after the last war. The delegation of the Dundee Jute Trade Unions to India reported in 1925 with regard to the jute industry:

"When Reserve Funds and Profits are added together the total gain to the shareholders in the ten years (1915-1924) reached the enormous total of £300 millions sterling, or 90 per cent per annum of the capital. There are from 300,000 to 327,000 workers employed at an average wage today of £12 10s. per annum. A profit of £300 million taken from 300,000 workers in ten years means £1,000 per head. That means £100 a year from each worker. And as the average wage is about £12 10s. per head, it means that the average annual profit is eight times the wages bill." (T. Johnston and J. F. Sime, *Exploitation in India*, pp. 5-6.)

With regard to the cotton industry the Tariff Board Inquiry reported in 1927:

"An examination of the balance sheets of the Bombay mills shows that for 1920, 35 companies comprising 42 mills declared dividends of 40 per cent and over, of which 10 companies comprising 14 mills paid 100 per cent and over and two mills paid over 200 per cent. In 1921 the number was 41 companies comprising 47 mills, out of

which 9 companies comprising 11 mills paid dividends of 100 per cent and over." (Report of the Indian Tariff Board, Cotton Textile Inquiry, 1927, Vol. I, p. 83.)

Cases were reported of dividends as high as 365 per cent.

This Eldorado of profit-making could not continue indefinitely, although exceptionally high rates were maintained right up to the world economic crisis.

The crisis and economic depression hit Indian industry hard. Ruthless measures of rationalization and wage-cutting were pushed through to maintain profits, especially in the textile industry.

The level of profits today, while no longer equaling the orgies of the post-war boom, still abundantly reveals the exceptional exploitation. Thus in jute, the Reliance Jute Mills Company paid dividends of 50 per cent in 1935, 42½ per cent in 1936 and 30 per cent in 1937. In cotton, the Muir Mills Company paid dividends of 35 per cent in 1935, 27½ per cent in 1936 and 22½ per cent in 1937. In tea, the New Dooars Tea Company paid dividends of 50 per cent both in 1935 and 1936; the Nagaisuke Tea Company paid 60 per cent in 1935 and 50 per cent in 1936; and the East Hope Estates Company paid 23 per cent in 1935, 33 per cent in 1936 and 40 per cent in 1937.

Even a portion of these colossal profits during the twenty years since the war of 1914-18, aggregating many hundreds of millions of pounds, could have done much to wipe out the most extreme scandals of the housing of the workers and begin the most elementary measures of social protection and hygiene. The responsibility to adopt the measures which could make this possible has never been recognized by the existing regime in India. In no leading country in the world are the rich let off so lightly in taxation as in India, while the main burden of taxation is placed squarely on the shoulders of the poorest. The peasants have to pay the land revenue, while the landlords' incomes are exempted from income tax. The workers have to pay through crushing indirect taxation, while the weight of income tax on the higher incomes is kept low. The total annual burden of indirect taxation, according to Sir James Grigg, the Finance Member of the Government of India, speaking in April, 1938, amounted to eight times the total of direct taxation.

Labor and social legislation in India is no less backward; and

the reality is far below the appearance on paper. Factory legislation of a kind was initiated in 1881, largely under the pressure of Lancashire employers alarmed at the growth of the Indian mill industry. For decades it was to a considerable extent a dead letter, even in the very limited respects in which it was directed, owing to lack of provision for enforcement.

"Taking all labor legislation into account, affecting factories, mines, plantations, docks, railways, harbors, etc., it is doubtful whether more than seven or eight millions at the outside come within its protective influence. The rest who constitute by far the greater majority of the industrial workers are engaged in small or what is known as unregulated industries." (Shiva Rao, *The Industrial Worker in India*, 1939, p. 210.)

The main factories legislation proper extended in 1936 to only 1,650,000 workers, or a minute fraction of the Indian working class. Even here the weakness of machinery for enforcement impairs its effectiveness. Industry in the Indian States is completely outside the Factories Act.

The main body of industry in India is unregulated. Here child labor, even of the tenderest years, is rampant; hours are unlimited; the most elementary provisions for health are lacking.

Social legislation in the modern sense is completely absent. There is no health insurance, no medical provision or sickness benefit, no provision for old age, no provision for unemployment and no general system of education. Even the most elementary requirements for public health, street-cleaning, water-supply, lighting, removal of refuse are almost entirely neglected in the working-class areas, while elaborate provision is made in the rich residential quarters inhabited by the Europeans and upper-class Indians, and the proceeds of taxation are spent on these quarters. The rotting slums, which bring disease and early death of their inhabitants, and regular returns of 30 to 40 per cent a year to their owners, are left to rot by the public authorities. There is no street-cleaning in the slums owned by private individuals and trusts; the narrow lanes between the lines are left covered with rotting refuse and garbage.

Thus under the enlightened protection of the "civilized" British Raj the filth-ridden conditions, limitless exploitation and servitude of the Indian workers are zealously maintained. From their

carefully protected and hygienically safeguarded palaces the European lords rule over their kingdom of squalor and misery.

This is the background of the Indian labor movement. It is to the millions living in these conditions that socialism and trade unionism have brought for the first time hope and confidence, an awakening to the power of combination, and the first vision of a goal which can end their misery.

2. FORMATION OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT

The beginnings of the labor movement in India go back half a century; but its continuous history as an organized movement dates only from the end of the first world war.

Although there was not yet any organization, it would be a mistake to underestimate the growth of solidarity in action and elementary class-consciousness of the Indian industrial workers during the decades preceding the war of 1914.

"Despite almost universal testimony before Commissions between 1880 and 1908 to the effect that there were no actual unions, many stated that the laborers in an individual mill were often able to act in unison and that, as a group, they were very independent. The inspector of boilers spoke in 1892 of 'an unnamed and unwritten bond of union among the workers peculiar to the people.' . . .

"Sir Sassoon David said in 1908 that if labor 'had no proper organization, they had an understanding among themselves.' Mr. Barucha, lately Director of Industries in Bombay Presidency, stated that 'the hands were all-powerful against the owners, and could combine, though they had not got a trade union.'" (D. H. Buchanan, *The Development of Capitalist Enterprise in India*, p. 425.)

During 1905-09 there was a notable advance, parallel to the militant national wave. A strike in the Bombay mills against an extension of hours, serious strikes on the railways, especially the Eastern Bengal State Railway, in the railway shops, and in the Government Press at Calcutta characterized this period. The highest point was reached with the six-day political mass strike in Bombay against the sentence of six years' imprisonment of Tilak in 1908.

Any stable organization was not yet possible. But this was a

reflection of the utter poverty and illiteracy of the workers and lack of any facilities, rather than of backwardness or lack of militancy.

It was the conditions of the close of the first world war, of the sequel of the Russian Revolution and the world revolutionary wave, that brought the Indian working class at a bound into full activity and opened the modern labor movement in India. Economic and political conditions alike contributed to the new awakening. Prices had doubled during the war; there had been no corresponding increase in wages; fantastic profits were being amassed by the employers. In the political field new demands were in the air; Congress-Moslem League unity had been achieved on the basis of a program of immediate self-government; the first waves of revolutionary influence were reaching India.

The strike movement which began in 1918 and swept the country in 1919 and 1920 was overwhelming in its intensity. The end of 1918 saw the first great strike affecting an entire industry in a leading center in the Bombay cotton mills; by January, 1919, 125,000 workers, covering practically all the mills, were out. The response to the hartal against the Rowlatt Acts in the spring of 1919 showed the political role of the workers in the forefront of the common national struggle. During 1919 strikes spread over the country. By the end of 1919 and the first half of 1920 the wave reached its height.

In the first six months of 1920 there were 200 strikes, involving 1½ million workers. This great period of militancy was the birth of the modern Indian labor movement.

Trade unions were formed by the score during this period. Many were essentially strike committees, springing up in the conditions of an immediate struggle, but without staying power. While the workers were ready for struggle the facilities for office organization were inevitably in other hands. Hence arose the contradiction of the early Indian labor movement. There was not yet any political movement on the basis of socialism, of the conceptions of the working class and the class struggle. In consequence, the so-called "outsiders" or helpers from other class elements who came forward, for varying reasons, to give their assistance in the work of organization, and whose assistance was in fact indispensable in this initial period, came without understanding of the aims and needs of the labor movement, and brought with them the

conceptions of middle-class politics. Whether their aims were philanthropic, as in some cases, careerist, as in others, or actuated by devotion to the national political struggle, as in others, they brought with them an alien outlook, and were incapable of guiding the young working-class movement on the basis of the class struggle which the workers were in fact waging. This misfortune long dogged the Indian labor movement, seriously hampering the splendid militancy and heroism of the workers; and its influences are not yet fully overcome.

It was in this period that the Indian Trade Union Congress was founded in 1920. The inaugural session was held in Bombay in October, 1920, with the national leader, Lajpat Rai, as President, and Joseph Baptista as Vice-President. In its early years this body was mainly a "top" organization, and many of its leaders had very limited connection with the working-class movement. The official address mainly inculcated the principles of class peace, moral and social improvement of the workers and uplift, and voiced demands for labor legislation and welfare provisions.

Up to 1927 the Trade Union Congress had a very limited practical connection with the working-class struggle. Nevertheless it formed the ground in which the leaders of the newly forming trade unions came together, and it was therefore only a question of time for the breath of the working-class struggle to reach it. This new period opened in 1927. By that year the Trade Union Congress united fifty-seven affiliated unions, with a recorded membership of 150,555.

Despite the character of the early nominal leadership of the Indian labor movement, the Government were under no illusions as to the significance of the emergence of the working-class movement in the last two decades. Their concern was shown in the appointment of the Bengal Committee on Industrial Unrest in 1921, the Bombay Industrial Disputes Committee of 1922, and the Madras Labor Department in 1919-20, followed by the Bombay Labor Department. A Trade Union Bill was prepared in 1921, although it was not finally passed until 1926. From 1921 regular statistics of industrial disputes were recorded.

The Government were sharply aware, as their many committees and commissions of inquiry throughout this period revealed, of the menace to the whole basis of imperialism once the rising working-class movement, whose power of struggle was

demonstrated throughout these post-war years, should reach political awakening and firm organization under class-conscious leadership. Their problem was to find the means to direct the movement into "safe" channels, or what one of their reports termed the "right type" of trade unionism—a more difficult task in a colonial country than in an imperialist country. This purpose underlay the Trade Union Act of 1926, with its special restriction of political activities. This understanding equally governed the sharp look-out against any signs of political working-class awakening.

3. POLITICAL AWAKENING

Nevertheless, despite all obstacles, the beginnings of political working-class awakening, of socialist and communist ideas, were slowly reaching India in the post-war years. From 1920 onwards the literature of the still very weak Communist Party of India had begun to make its way. From 1924 a journal, the *Socialist*, was appearing in Bombay under the editorship of S. A. Dange, who was to become Assistant Secretary of the Trade Union Congress. The Government lost no time to act. In 1924 the Cawnpore Trial was staged against four of the Communist leaders, Dange, Shaukat Usmani, Muzaffar Ahmad and Das Gupta. All four were sentenced to four years' imprisonment. This was the baptism of the political working-class movement in India.

Repression could not check the advance of awakening. By 1926-27 socialist ideas were spreading widely. A new initial form of political working-class and socialist organization began to appear in the Workers' and Peasants' parties, which sprang up and united militant elements in the trade-union movement with left elements in the National Congress. The first Workers' and Peasants' Party was formed in Bengal in February, 1926; others followed in Bombay, the United Provinces and the Punjab. These were united in 1928 in the All-India Workers' and Peasants' Party, which held its first Congress in December, 1928. This political expression, still suffering from many forms of initial confusion, but revealing the growing new forces, accompanied the new wave of working-class awakening, the first signs of which began to appear in 1927.

At the Delhi session of the Trade Union Congress in the spring

of 1927 (which was attended by the British Communist M.P., Shapurji Saklatvala), and still more markedly at the Cawnpore session later in the year, the emergence was revealed of challenging militant voices within the leadership of trade unionism. It became speedily clear that the new working-class leadership had the support of the majority of Indian trade unionists, although the slow procedure of registration of actual voting strength delayed the final official recognition of the majority until 1929. The First of May in 1927 was for the first time celebrated in Bombay as Labor Day—the symbol of the opening of a new era of the Indian labor movement as a conscious part of the international labor movement.

The year 1928 saw the greatest tide of working-class advance and activity of the post-war period. The center of this advance was in Bombay. For the first time a working-class leadership had emerged, close to the workers in the factories, guided by the principles of the class struggle, and operating as a single force in the economic and political field. The response of the workers was overwhelming. The political strikes and demonstrations against the arrival of the Simon Commission in February placed the working class for the moment in the vanguard of the national struggle; for both the Congress leadership and the reformist trade-union leadership had frowned on the project and were startled by its success. Many of the Bombay municipal workers were victimized and discharged for their participation; a further strike compelled their reinstatement.

Trade-union organization shot up. According to the Government's figures trade-union membership in Bombay, which in the three years 1923-26 had only advanced from 48,669 to 59,544, reached 75,602 by 1927, leaped forward to 95,321 by March, 1928, and to 200,325 by March, 1929. Foremost in this advance was the famous Girni Kamgar (Red Flag) Union of the Bombay mill-workers, which started during the year with a membership of only 324, and, according to the Government's *Labor Gazette* returns, had reached 54,000 by December, 1928, and 65,000 by the first quarter of 1929.

A critical point had thus been reached by the opening of 1929. The working-class movement was advancing in the forefront of the economic and political scene. The old reformist leadership was being thrust aside. The Delegation of the British Trades

Union Congress in 1927-28, in which imperialism had placed great hopes, had failed in its objective of securing the affiliation of the Indian Trade Union Congress to the reformist Trade Union International in Europe. The alarm of the Government was unconcealed. The Viceroy, Lord Irwin, in his speech to the Legislative Assembly in January, 1929, declared that "the disquieting spread of communist doctrines has been causing anxiety," and announced that the Government would take measures. "The growth of communist propaganda and influence," records the Government annual report on "India in 1928-29," "especially among the industrial classes of certain large towns, caused anxiety to the authorities."

In 1929 the Government acted and turned its full offensive to counter the rise of the working-class movement. The Public Safety Bill had been introduced in September, 1928, with the object, according to the official report, "to curb communist activities in India," but had been rejected by the Legislative Assembly; in the spring of 1929 it was issued as a special Ordinance by the Viceroy. The Whitley Commission on Labor was appointed. The Trades Disputes Act was passed to provide conciliation machinery, prohibit sympathetic strikes and limit the right to strike in public utility services. The Bombay Riots Inquiry Committee was set up, and recommended that "the Government should take drastic action against the activities of the communists in Bombay"; it further raised the question whether the Trade Union Act should not be so amended "as to exclude communists from management in registered trade unions."

In March, 1929, the Government's main blow fell. The principal active leaders of the working-class movement were arrested from all over India and brought to the small inland town of Meerut, far from any industrial center, for trial. One of the longest and most elaborate state trials in history opened.

Thirty-one leaders were originally arrested, and one more was subsequently added. The arrested men included the Vice-President, a former President and two Assistant Secretaries of the Trade Union Congress; the Secretaries of the Bombay and of the Bengal Provincial Trade Union Federations; all the officials of the Girni Kamgar Union, most of those of the G.I.P. Railwaymen's Union, as well as those of a number of other unions, and the Secretaries and other officials of the Workers' and

Peasants' parties in Bengal, Bombay and the United Provinces. Three members of the All-India Congress Committee were arrested, including the Bombay Provincial Secretary of the Congress. Three of the four sentenced at Cawnpore were again on trial. Three Englishmen (Ben Bradley, Philip Spratt and Lester Hutchinson) were included. When these three representatives of the English working-class movement stood in the dock with Indian workers, and eventually went to prison with them, this was a historic demonstration of living international working-class unity, shattering the old barriers and constituting a landmark of deep significance for the future fraternal relations of the British and Indian peoples.

The arrested leaders of the Indian working-class movement bore themselves in a manner which revealed that the Indian working-class movement, even though still only in an initial stage of organization, had reached full consciousness and dignity of its role. The speeches of the defense remain among the most valuable documents of the Indian labor movement. A new India was revealed in them.

The Government dragged out the trial for three and a half years—critical years of India's history, during which the best leaders of the working class were thus removed.

This trial, as historic a trial for the suppression of a rising labor movement as that of the Dorchester Laborers a century ago in British labor history, was conducted, during the main part of its course, under a Labor Government, which accepted "full responsibility" for it ("We accept full responsibility.... The Secretary of State is energetically backing up the Government of India"—Dr. Drummond Shiels at the Labor Party Conference at Brighton, 1929). "The machinery of the law must operate," was the judgment of the *Daily Herald* on June 25, 1929. "The trial should be expedited as quickly as possible," wrote Sir Walter Citrine on October 1, 1929, in answer to the appeal of the Indian Trade Union Congress to the British Trades Union Congress; "the offense with which the accused are charged is a political offense, and one which in the opinion of the General Council does not directly affect the Indian trade-union movement as such." Later, after the trial was over and the Labor Government out of office, in 1933 the National Joint Council of the Trades Union Congress and Labor Party issued a pamphlet stating that "the

whole of the proceedings from beginning to end are utterly indefensible and constitute something in the nature of a judicial scandal."

In January, 1933, savage sentences were awarded: transportation for life for Muzaffar Ahmad; twelve years' transportation for Dange, Ghate, Joglekar, Nimbkar and Spratt; ten years' transportation for Bradley, Mirajkar and Usmani; and so down to the lightest sentence of three years' rigorous imprisonment. The international agitation which followed was successful in securing drastic reduction of these sentences on appeal.

The first years after the Meerut arrests were a difficult period for the Indian labor movement. The strike movement in these years, entering into the economic crisis, met with heavy defeats.

The Meerut trial, although, as in every such case, sowing deep the seeds for the future strength and victory of the movement, dealt a heavy immediate blow to the labor movement. The Indian working class, at such an early stage of development, could not easily at once replace this leadership which had been removed. Therefore in the critical years of national struggle which followed, the political role of the working class was weakened—as had been the intention of imperialism.

Difficulties in the trade-union movement also followed. The victory of the left-wing majority in the Trade Union Congress, on the basis of the superior strength and practical work of organization achieved in the preceding two years, was finally realized at the Nagpur Trade Union Congress at the end of 1929. The old reformist leadership, finding themselves in a minority, refused to accept the democratic decision of the majority, and split the Trade Union Congress, carrying away the unions supporting them to form the Trade Union Federation. A further split followed in 1931. These splits seriously weakened the growth of Indian trade unionism for several years.

Nevertheless, the movement for unity steadily gathered force from 1934 onwards, and full reunion of Indian trade unionism in the united Trade Union Congress was finally re-established in 1940. The last returned membership of the Indian Trade Union Congress is 600,000.

The political working-class movement has also shown a marked advance in the past decade. The Workers' and Peasants' parties, which in view of their two-class character could only form a

transitional stage of growth and no permanent basis for political working-class organization, passed out of the picture after Meerut. In 1934 the Communist Party was proclaimed illegal by the Government. Such measures could not check the rapid growth of socialist and communist influence and Marxist ideas. New accessions of strength were won after the close of the national non-co-operation struggle of 1930-34, as the younger national elements proceeded to draw the lessons of their struggle and came under the influence of socialist ideas. The period of the Congress Provincial Ministries from 1937 to 1939 was marked by a signal advance of the working-class and peasant movement, the strike wave of 1937 reaching to the largest number of workers on record. An active campaign for the lifting of the ban on the Communist Party was conducted by the Trade Union Congress and left nationalist representatives. The one-day political strike of the Bombay workers in October, 1939, revealed the role of the working class in the vanguard of the political movement. In 1942 the ban on the Communist Party was lifted, reflecting the growth of its mass influence, and opening a new period of extended political activity and responsibility of the Indian working-class movement in the increasingly critical situation.