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GROWTH OF TRADE UNIONISM IN INDIA

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## GROWTH OF TRADE UNIONISM IN INDIA

The history of trade unionism in India is interspersed with economic and political events which moulded its growth pattern and contributed to its present strengths and weaknesses. While the union movement has now emerged as a formidable politico-economic force to reckon with in the industrial sector, its looseness of structure could well be inferred from the secular decline of average union membership. It may therefore be necessary to recall major events -- formation of unions, political developments, economic situations -- to understand the growth pattern of unionism. This survey will be done in different stages -- emergence of unionism, radicals vs. reformists, initial push, World War II and its aftermath, and post-independence growth. It will conclude with an analysis of the secular trend in growth of trade unionism in India.

### Emergence of Unionism

The advent of trade unionism in India could be traced to early industrialisation, beginning in the 1850s with the establishment of cotton and jute mills in Bombay and Calcutta.<sup>1</sup> These industries, instead of bringing prosperity to workers, proved to be detrimental

to them. The setting up of modern large scale factories created many stresses and strains for labour. Besides becoming slaves of machines, the workers' living and working conditions were in a deplorable state. Such adversities of labour as insecurity of employment, inhuman treatment by European supervisors, excessively long hours of work without break, absence of safety devices at the workplace, employment of women and child labour, dearth of accommodation as well as its remoteness from the factories and above all wages below subsistence were commonly evident all over India. The widespread discontent among workers arising out of their plight and their effort to mitigate the attendant evils of industrialisation seem to have provided the major impetus for trade unionism to take root.

The workers' economic struggle derived reinforcement from the nationalist movement. Primary leadership for trade unions came from persons who had strong commitment towards country's political freedom and in the process sought workers' active support and help to consolidate their strength. Early support to trade unionism was also provided by a group of social workers, humanists and philanthropists who were distressed with the miseries of workers and tried to assist workers by espousing their cause through publishing journals<sup>2</sup> or sending appeals/memoranda to the government. The persistent effort of these leaders led to the appointment of various committees and commissions of labour to probe into workers' plight. Reference may be made in this

regard to Bombay Factories Commission in 1884, Indian Factory Labour Commission in 1890, Royal Commission on Labour in 1892 and Indian Factory Labour Commission in 1908.<sup>3</sup>

Indian trade unionism, in its early phase, was in a loose, amorphous state. Describing this situation an observer has noted:

....(They) were, for the most part, temporary organizations which existed only so long as the grievances of their members were not remedied. Upon the achievement of their object, viz., the increase of wages and, frequently, other demands, the interest of members and even of promoters diminished and in a short space of time the 'Unions' ceased to exist.<sup>4</sup>

This state continued till 1918, when the Madras Labour Union<sup>5</sup> was formed under the leadership of BP Wadia. The Madras Labour Union has been accepted as the first genuine, properly organised 'trade union' in India. The basic issues that led its formation were the attempt of the workers of Buckingham Carnatic Mills to resolve their grievances like short midday recess, low wages and 'abuse, insult and assault' by the European supervisors. Subsequent to the formation of MLU one notable development was the formation of Textile Labour Association (TLA) in Ahmedabad in 1918 to secure better wages for textile workers. The TLA had been playing an important role for the betterment of Ahmedabad workers. Following the inception of MLU and TLA unions were formed in Bombay, Bengal, UP, and Punjab.

### Radicals vs. Reformists

The Indian trade unionism entered a significant phase of development with the formation of All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) on October 31, 1920, under the presidentship of Lala Lajpat Rai. AITUC, the first national organization of labour, was the answer to the growing need to have a nominating body to represent Indian labour at the International Labour Conference at Geneva. The basic objectives of AITUC were to represent, safeguard, and promote workers' economic, social, and political interests, provide a common platform for all existing labour organizations to rationalise their activities and coordinate, and extend and consolidate the trade union movement in the country.

The beginning of the '20s also witnessed a wave of strikes in different parts of the country. Although the immediate provocation was wage-cut, retrenchment or long hours of work, several other factors accentuated conflict situations. The economic hardship generated by the First World War, the advent of militant leadership under the communists, and the spread of labour uprising in many countries combined together in intensifying the workers' organised struggle. A brief account of the prevailing situation was reported by the Royal Commission on Labour:

The two or three years following the close of the War saw the formation of a large number of organizations, owing their origin mainly to the grave economic difficulties of industrial labour. The leading industries were yielding phenomenal profits, but wages lagged behind prices and labour so far from participating in the unprecedented prosperity, often found condition harder than before. The world wide uprising of labour consciousness extended to India, and for the first time the mass of industrial workers awoke to their disabilities particularly in the matter of wages and hours and to the possibility of combination. The effect of this upsurge was enhanced by political turmoil which added to the prevailing feeling of unrest and assisted to provide willing leaders of a trade union movement.<sup>6</sup>

The mounting industrial unrest caused sufficient concern to the government. Due to its realisation of the gravity of the situation as well as the pressures exerted by the ILO at Geneva, the government introduced a number of legislative measures for industrial workers. Notable among them were : Indian Factories Act, 1923, Indian Mines Act 1923, Workmen's Compensation Act, and the Indian Trade Union Act 1926. The last named was significant for the development of trade unionism since it officially recognised the legitimacy of workers' right to form and join unions.

The strike wave that swept India brought into focus two distinctly different lines of action for working class struggle. It established the dominance of communists who successfully organised many strikes, held radical views and believed in revolutionary class struggle.

Notable among these leaders were Muzaffar Ahmed, SA Dange, and Bhupendra Nath Dutt. They were strongly in favour of politicalisation of workers to intensify their economic struggle. There was the other group in AITUC, popularly known as the 'reformists', which emphasised constitutional remedy to resolve workers' problems. The reformists were led by NM Joshi, VV Giri, Chamal Lall, B Shiva Rao and others. They were against the workers' political involvement and discouraged it by all possible means. The reformists wanted AITUC affiliated with reformist trade unions such as International Federation of Trade Unions, Amsterdam while the radicals insisted on affiliation with Red International Labour Union, Moscow, and Pan Pacific Trade Union Secretariat.

The divergence in views and approach among top leaders culminated in a major split in AITUC at its tenth session held at Nagpur on November 28-30, 1929. The President of this historic session was Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who described his experience as follows:

I found the old tussle going on between the reformists and the more advanced and revolutionary elements... There was the old trade union group, moderate in politics and indeed distrusting the intrusion politics in industrial matters. They believed in industrial action only, and that too, of a cautious character, and aimed at the gradual betterment of workers' conditions... The other group was more militant, believed in political action, and openly proclaimed its revolutionary outlook. It was influenced though by no means controlled by some communists and near communists .. The radical group, though more powerful in the rank and file, had little opportunity of influencing policy at the top... There was a dissatisfaction and friction and a desire on the part of the radical elements to seize power in the TUC?



The reformist group was in a minority at Nagpur and seceded from the parent body and at the initiative of NM Joshi decided to form a new organization, the All India Trade Union Federation (AITUF). At the meeting held on December 1, 1929 the group proposed to exclude unions and men having communist leaning from being affiliated to or represented in the new organization. The AITUF was in favour of cooperating with the government in the matter of official commissions and committees and maintained its close link with (British) Trades Union Congress and International Federation of Trade Unions. The latter two organizations also provided financial support and assistance to AITUF.

The communist domination in trade unionism was gradually gaining momentum while industrial unrest mounted. Influenced by both these factors the government decided to take certain repressive measures. The foremost among them was the enactment of Trade Disputes Act, 1929. Although the Act laid down provisions for formation of Conciliation Board and Courts of Enquiry for settlement of disputes, it also imposed fine or imprisonment or both for strike or lockout in public utility services and a ban on general strike or sympathetic strike. Each individual intending to participate in the strike was required to give one month's written notice to the administration. The Act also rendered protection to those not intending to join a given strike and enabled them to claim compensation from the Union. To reinforce their strong

arm tactics, the government also introduced the Public Safety Bill. Both the measures were strongly opposed by all trade unions alike.

In order to counteract the growing opposition and unrest and especially to eliminate the 'Communist menace' from trade unionism the government took a desperate step and arrested 31 leading communist leaders on March 20, 1929. The charges against them were : engaging in communist activities, forming labour unions, conducting strikes and similar other activities<sup>8</sup> and above all to conspire to overthrow the King of the sovereignty of British India by means of criminal force or the show of criminal force.<sup>9</sup> The trial of this case, known as 'Meerut Communist Conspiracy Case', concluded on August 3, 1933 and was criticised by the elites in India and elsewhere as a judicial scandal.

#### Initial Push

The notable phenomenon in the '30s was the worldwide great depression and its consequences for industrial workers. In their attempt to combat the economic crisis the employers resorted to large scale retrenchment and wage cuts. Workers resisted this move by going on strike. Bombay witnessed maximum industrial unrest.

By the middle of the decade a significant change had taken place in the political sphere which had a favourable impact on trade unionism. In 1937, popular ministries were formed in seven provinces by the Indian National Congress following the elections held under the Government of India Act, 1935. The Congress in its election manifesto, promised to

secured for workers: a decent standard of living, hours of work and conditions of labour in conformity with international standard, suitable disputes settlement machinery, the right to strike and form unions.<sup>10</sup>

In order to fulfil their election promises and prevent future outbreak of strikes, the provincial governments in Madras, Bihar, Bombay, UP, and CP and Berar appointed Labour Enquiry Committees to investigate the actual conditions of labour. Several enactments were also made in favour of workers, viz., Bombay Industrial Disputes Act 1938, Bombay Shop Assistants Act 1939, Bengal Maternity Act 1939 and the CP Maternity Act 1939.

The government's new role towards labour warranted a coordinated and united effort on the part of national organizations. A proposal was mooted to constitute a united body and accordingly the National Trade Union Federation (NTUF) came into existence. Subsequent to this a series of meetings and deliberations were held and a unity formula was finally evolved resulting in a joint board comprising representatives of NTUF and AITUC. In the joint session of NTUF and AITUC held at Nagpur on April 17, 1938 the following conditions, inter alia, were laid down to restore unity: (a) NTUF as a unit would be affiliated to AITUC; (b) AITUC would accept the constitution of the NTUF; (c) All questions relating to political problems and strikes would be decided by three-fourth majority of the general council or working committee. The general council would have been shared equally by the two sides.<sup>11</sup>

Statistical evidence for the period (Table 1) shows a spurt in growth both in terms of number of unions formed as well as total membership. Taking 1928 as the base year the index number of unions submitting returns and their membership grew from 232.14 and 179.96 in 1929 to 1407.14 and 396.70 in 1939 respectively. However, taking into account the total number of registered unions, irrespective of their submitting returns or not, the extent of growth seems to be still larger from 285.62 in 1929 to 1937.93 in 1939. Nevertheless, the increase in total membership was not proportionate to the number of unions formed. For instance, between 1929 and 1939 the growth in number of unions is to the extent of 1175 points as against the membership growth of 216.74 points only. The relatively larger and also faster growth of union formation appears to have adversely affected the average membership of individual unions. The index number of average membership declined from 77.52 in 1929 to 28.19 in 1939.

#### World War II and its aftermath

Indian trade unionism entered an eventful phase with the outbreak of World War II on September 3, 1939. Besides its economic aspects, the war had farreaching political implications. The Vicoroy proclaimed India as a belligerent. The powers and authorities of provincial ministries were substantially curtailed and the Government of India was vested with overriding power under the 'Defence of India Ordinance'. The ministries

quit office in protest against deprivation of their autonomy. Consequent upon this the implementation of the recommendation of various Labour Enquiry Committees and the enforcement of various Acts remained suspended.

During the War, Indian trade unionism suffered a further setback in the form of second split in AITUC. The unity restored on the eve of the War could not be sustained due to divergent views that emerged on the issue of supporting or denouncing the War. The AITUC in its Bombay session held in 1939 adopted a resolution that Indian working class would not get political freedom or democracy or any other economic benefit by supporting the War effort of the British government. This resolution, however, was opposed by a section of AITUC leaders who felt that the successful termination of the War could only bring the desired economic, social and political advancement of workers. Under the leadership of MN Roy, the latter group seceded from AITUC and formed a rival central organization called the Indian Federation of Labour (IFL). Soon after its formation the IFL earned the patronage of the Government in return for active support to War effort.

Workers were the worst hit : their living and working conditions further aggravated. Many of the existing facilities and benefits were curtailed under the pretext of emergency. The War time inflation helped industrialists to accumulate enormous profits, yet the rise in wages was negligible. The index for industrial production and for profits (for all industries) rose from 102.7 and 138.0 in 1939 to 120.0 and 233.6 in 1945 respectively. But the real earning of workers witnessed a steep fall from 108.6 to 74.9.<sup>12</sup>

The economic hardship of workers led to widespread strikes in different parts of India. They demanded dearness allowance and bonus to compensate for the unprecedented rise in prices. But the Government invoked rule 81-A of the Defence of India Rules and banned on strikes and lockouts.

No improvements were forthcoming even after the War. The struggle for political independence was getting intensified. Inflation was still rampant. Discontent among workers was persisting and the number of strikes was on the increase. Disunity in the trade union rank was still predominant. Under such a situation one notable development was the formation of Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) on May 3, 1947.

The INTUC in fact emerged as the labour wing of the Indian National Congress. The Congress formed ministry following independence on August 15, 1947. All along, the INTUC had been with the government. Commenting on INTUC's supportive role one observer has candidly remarked:

The new organization started work with two definite aims. One was to improve by all possible peaceful means the working and living conditions of labour and the second was to strengthen the hands of the Government of free India with the help of contended labour.<sup>13</sup>

In view of the mounting industrial unrest which still persisted, the primary responsibility of the new government became the restoration of industrial peace and harmony. This concern was reflected in the constitution of INTUC which emphasised inter alia the redressal of grievances without stoppage of work through negotiation or conciliation, and failing those, through arbitration or adjudication.<sup>14</sup>

In order to identify measures to avoid strikes and combat unrest a conference of labour and management representatives was convened in New Delhi in December 1947. The conference unanimously adopted a resolution to hold mutual discussion on common problems so as to maintain industrial peace in future. The resolution became known as the Industrial Truce Resolution.<sup>15</sup>

However, INTUC's activities were severely criticised by non-Congress leaders who held that it was working as an adjunct of Congress party and practising 'government sponsored' trade unionism. The foremost among them were the socialists who had seceded from the Congress in early 1948 and formed Hind Mazdoor Panchayat (HMP). They felt that a trade union largely dominated by a political party, viz. Congress, would be of no help to workers. A proposal was mooted to form a separate organization independent of political affiliation. A meeting was held in Calcutta on December 24, 1948 where the leaders of HMP, IFL, a section of AITUC, and some independent unions unanimously decided to form Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS) to safeguard and promote workers' rights and interests.

A section of the participants, however, could not agree with the principles and objectives of HMS. They held a separate meeting in Calcutta on December 27, 1948 and discussed the feasibility of forming another organization. Subsequently, on April 30, 1949 the United Trade Union Congress (UTUC) was formed with the objective of establishing a pure trade union movement and building up a central platform of labour free from sectarian party politics.

Looking at the growth of union membership it is noted that the trend evident in the 30s had somewhat changed at least in the first half of the '40s (Table 2). Although the growth of the number of unions and their total membership was sustained, the formation of unions was fairly restricted in the first half allowing the total membership to grow at a relatively faster rate. For instance, taking 1940 as the base year the index number of total union membership rose from 100.53 in 1941 to 174.00 in 1945 — ie., a 73.47 point rise as against the 20 point rise in the index number of unions submitting returns — from 107.33 in 1941 to 127.33 in 1945. Consequent upon this, an increasing trend of average membership of individual unions is noted from 93.66 in 1941 to 136.67 in 1945.

This situation got reversed in the later half of '40s. More specifically, the trend in this half appears similar to the early '30s. A consistent fall is evident in the average membership of individual unions resulting from a relatively faster growth in the number of unions. There was a substantial decline in the index number of average membership from 130.03 in 1946 to 93.38 in 1949 as against a noteworthy rise in the index number of union formation from 162.97 in 1946 to 472.26 in 1949.

#### Post-independence Growth

The four central organizations were busy in strengthening their own base. By and large, a process of consolidation of the movement had started in the beginning of the '50s. As for the growth of union membership the trend evident in the latter half of the 1940s is repeated



in the subsequent decade, i.e., in the 1950s (Table 3). The growth evident in total membership compared to union formation is much less in proportion. The net outcome is diminishing **size** of individual unions. The index of average membership deteriorated from 92.48 in 1951 to 63.63 in 1959 as against a rising index of number of unions from 104.33 in 1951 to 314.75 in 1959.

The trend of falling average membership was, however, checked in the '60s owing to a check in the growth of total union formation (Table 4). In other words, barring minor exceptions the average membership sustained a fair degree of stability throughout the 1960s.

#### The Secular Trend in Union Membership

The characteristic feature that seems to be common to the sub-periods also holds good for the period as a whole (1928-1969). The overall trend suggests that the mushroom growth of unions was not accompanied by a proportionate growth in total membership. As a consequence, the total membership has been fragmented among too many unions leading to a significant fall in the average membership of individual unions (Tables 5 and 6). Taking 1928 as the base year the index for number of unions submitting returns rose from 232.14 in 1929 to 29478.57 in 1969 accompanied by a disproportionate rise in the total membership index from 179.96 to 4836.06. As against the enormous growth in union formation the index for average membership fell sharply from 77.52 in

1929 to 16.39 in 1969. This trend is further corroborated by graphical presentation in Figure 1. As we note in figure 1 both the lines representing the number of registered trade unions and unions submitting returns move wide above the line showing total membership growth. Its implication becomes glaring by the steep downward movement of the line representing average membership per union. In short, the growth trend of Indian trade unions over the past forty years or so seems to be largely dominated by multiplicity and its adverse consequences.

During this period, both political and economic conditions had jointly and severally influenced the growth of unionism. These economic conditions are summarised in Tables 7 and 8. A graphical representation (Figure 2) shows that employment, cost of living and wage rates move in sympathy with the trade union membership. An attempt was therefore made to test a simple econometric model<sup>16</sup> based on the data contained in Table 7. Some selected results are being reproduced below :

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Log T} &= -6.23 + 1.828^* \log E + .070 \log \text{ML}_{t-1} + .522^* \log \text{CPI}_{t-1} \\ &\quad (11.54) \quad (7.87) \quad (1.28) \quad (3.69) \\ \bar{R}^2 &= .965; \text{Dw} = .526 \quad \dots (1) \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Log T} &= -7.258 + 2.793^* \log E + .088 \log \text{ML}_{t-1} - .239 \log \text{Wr}_{t-1} \\ &\quad (11.88) \quad (11.87) \quad (1.39) \quad (.84) \\ \bar{R}^2 &= .952; \text{Dw} = .534 \quad \dots (2) \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Log T} &= -4.202 + 1.125^* \log E + .064 \log \text{ML}_{t-1} + .769^* \log \text{W}_{t-1} \\ &\quad (5.82) \quad (3.88) \quad (1.33) \quad (5.35) \\ \bar{R}^2 &= .973; \text{Dw} = .607 \quad \dots (3) \end{aligned}$$

Note : Where T = Trade union membership; E = Employment; ML = Man-days lost; CPI = Consumer Price Index; W = Wages; Wr = Real wages

Estimated 't' ratios are provided in the parantheses.

\*Refers to significance of regression coefficients at 1% level.

It may be inferred that employment had a significant effect on union membership throughout this period. In the three equations, the regression coefficient for employment turned out to be both positive and statistically significant. Among the other variables the consumer price index and wages also seemed to have considerable influence on the growth of unionism. Regression coefficient for consumer price index in equation (1) and for wages in equation (3) were found to have statistical significance as well as the correct sign. Although the regression coefficient for the real wages had the correct sign, it was found statistically insignificant. Similarly, the regression coefficient for mandays lost also had the correct sign but with statistical insignificance. In all the three equations, the coefficient of determination is fairly high which would indicate that the variables considered were adequate for an explanation of union growth.

It may be concluded from this statistical analysis that employment had by and large the most crucial impact on the growth of unionism in the country. Similarly, rising prices, wages, real wages and strike action also had some influence on unionism. On the whole the hypothesis that both the opportunity as well as the ability of the unions to grow in response to socio-economic development appears to be valid since the late '20s.

Table 1

Trade Union Membership (1928-1940)

(1928 = 100)

Year	Index of registered unions	Index of unions submitting returns	Index of union membership	Index of av. membership per union
1928	100	100	100	100
1929	258.62	232.14	179.96	77.52
1930	358.62	321.43	240.86	74.94
1931	410.34	378.57	217.77	57.52
1932	451.72	432.14	234.24	54.20
1933	586.21	525.00	235.91	44.94
1934	658.62	571.43	206.79	36.42
1935	734.48	653.57	283.17	43.33
1936	831.03	732.14	266.68	36.42
1937	934.48	814.29	259.44	31.86
1938	1448.28	1225.00	387.71	31.65
1939	1937.93	1407.14	396.70	28.19
1940	2300.00	1607.14	507.99	31.61

Table 2  
Trade Union Membership (1940-1950)

(1940 = 100)

Year	Index of registered unions	Index of unions submitting returns	Index of union membership	Index of av. membership per union
1940	100	100	100	100
1941	109.00	107.33	100.53	93.66
1942	111.99	101.11	112.20	110.97
1943	103.90	108.67	134.07	123.38
1944	114.09	125.11	152.79	122.12
1945	129.69	127.33	174.00	136.65
1946	162.97	130.00	169.04	130.03
1947	183.66	221.78	260.59	117.50
1948	414.69	360.00	325.34	90.37
1949	472.26	410.67	383.48	93.38
1950	528.04	426.44	356.29	83.55

Table 3

Trade Union Membership (1950-1960)

(1950 = 100)

Year	Index of registered unions	Index of unions submitting returns	Index of union membership	Index of av. membership per union
1950	100	100	100	100
1951	106.93	104.33	96.48	92.48
1952	131.26	133.19	109.62	82.30
1953	140.09	141.64	115.26	81.38
1954	171.18	171.70	116.01	67.56
1955	189.04	184.73	119.18	64.52
1956	229.84	208.75	124.92	59.84
1957	242.87	229.23	130.52	56.94
1958	285.21	287.65	165.56	57.56
1959	290.40	314.75	200.26	63.63
1960	306.95	343.30	215.42	62.75

Table 4  
Trade Union Membership (1960-1969)

(1960 = 100)

Year	Index of registered unions	Index of unions submitting returns	Index of union membership	Index of av. membership per union
1960	100	100	100	100
1961	104.63	103.42	102.29	97.98
1962	107.43	107.58	101.37	94.29
1963	109.40	110.06	93.86	85.38
1964	110.85	110.05	101.37	92.09
1965	120.46	114.50	113.94	99.50
1966	132.92	107.56	111.37	103.53
1967	138.97	112.04	114.78	102.52
1968	151.78	131.89	129.85	98.48
1969	176.75	125.29	124.04	98.98

Table 5

Growth of Indian Trade Unions (1928-1969)

Year	No. of regd. union	No. of union submitting	No. of union members	Average no. of members per union
1	2	3	4	5
1928	29	28	100619	3594
1929	75	65	181077	2786
1930	104	90	242355	2693
1931	119	106	219115	2067
1932	131	121	235693	1948
1933	170	147	237369	1615
1934	191	160	208071	1300
1935	213	183	284918	1557
1936	241	205	268326	1309
1937	271	228	261047	1145
1938	420	343	390112	1137
1939	562	394	399159	1013
1940	667	450	511138	1136
1941	727	483	513832	1064
1942	747	455	573520	1260
1943	693	489	685299	1401
1944	761	563	780967	1387
1945	865	573	889388	1552
1946	1087	585	864031	1477



1	2	3	4	5
1947	1225	998	1331962	1335
1948	2766	1620	1662929	1027
1949	3150	1848	1960107	1061
1950	3522	1919	1821132	949
1951	3766	2002	1756971	878
1952	4623	2556	1996311	781
1953	4934	2718	2099003	772
1954	6029	3295	2112695	641
1955	6658	3545	2170450	612
1956	8095	4006	2275000	568
1957	8554	4399	2377000	540
1958	10045	5520	3015000	546
1959	10228	6040	3647000	604
1960	10811	6588	3923000	595
1961	11312	6813	4013000	589
1962	11416	6954	3960000	569
1963	11817	7114	3667000	515
1964	11971	7106	3956000	557
1965	12744	7380	4441000	602
1966	14370	7086	4369000	617
1967	15024	7381	4503000	610
1968	16409	8689	5094000	586
1969	18460	8254	4866000	589

Source : (1) 1928-61, V B Karnik, Indian Trade Unions, A Survey, Appendix 1, page 321.

(2) 1961-69, Indian Labour Statistics.

Table 3  
Annual Index of Growth of Indian Trade Unions (1928-69)

Year	Index of regd. unions	Index of unions submitting returns	Index of union membership	Index of average membership per union
1	2	3	4	5
1928	100	100	100	100
1929	258.62	232.14	179.96	77.52
1930	358.62	321.43	240.86	74.93
1931	410.34	378.57	217.77	57.51
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1939	1937.93	1407.14	396.70	28.19
1940	2300.00	1607.14	507.99	31.61
1941	2506.90	1725.00	510.67	29.60
1942	2575.86	1625.00	569.99	35.06
1943	2389.66	1746.43	681.08	38.98
1944	2624.14	2010.71	776.16	38.59
1945	2982.76	2046.43	883.72	43.18
1946	3748.28	2089.29	858.72	41.10
1947	4224.14	3564.29	1323.77	37.15
1948	9537.93	5785.71	1652.70	28.58
1949	10862.07	6600.00	1948.05	29.52
1950	12144.83	6853.57	1809.93	26.41

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1	2	3	4	5
1951	12986.21	7150.00	1746.16	24.43
1952	15941.38	9128.57	1984.03	21.73
1953	17013.79	9707.14	2086.09	21.48
1954	20789.66	11767.86	2099.70	17.84
1955	22958.62	12660.71	2157.10	17.03
1956	27913.79	14307.14	2261.00	15.80
1957	29496.55	15710.71	2362.38	15.03
1958	34637.93	19714.29	2996.45	15.19
1959	35268.97	21571.43	3624.56	16.81
1960	37279.31	23528.57	3898.87	16.56
1961	39006.90	24332.14	3988.31	16.39
1962	39365.52	24835.71	3935.64	15.83
1963	40748.28	25407.14	3644.44	14.33
1964	41279.31	25378.57	3931.66	15.50
1965	43944.83	26357.14	4413.68	16.75
1966	49551.72	25307.14	4342.12	17.17
1967	51806.90	26360.71	4475.30	16.97
1968	56582.76	31032.14	5062.66	16.30
1969	63655.17	29478.57	4836.06	16.39

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Table 7  
 Index of Trade Union Membership and Associated Variables:  
 1929-1969 (base year = 1944)

Year	Index of trade union membership	Index of employ- ment	Index of cost of living	Index of mandays lost	Index of real wages	Index of wages
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1929	23.19	57.69	57.8	352.90	65.40	43.15
1930	31.03	60.59	52.9	65.61	74.72	41.51
1931	28.06	55.51	43.9	69.86	91.29	43.76
1932	30.18	58.21	44.5	55.77	94.85	44.17
1933	30.39	56.34	42.3	62.69	92.02	43.56
1934	26.64	55.43	39.3	138.53	94.11	37.22
1935	36.48	63.84	40.5	28.24	96.32	38.04
1936	34.36	65.50	39.4	155.43	106.99	41.10
1937	33.43	67.01	40.2	260.56	110.06	43.35
1938	49.95	68.60	41.8	266.84	117.06	47.65
1939	51.11	69.43	41.2	144.83	122.70	49.28
1940	65.45	73.12	41.0	219.80	125.15	52.56
1941	65.79	85.49	44.8	96.61	120.2	55.42
1942	73.44	90.48	57.6	167.67	110.18	64.42
1943	87.75	96.59	114.5	67.42	90.55	89.57
1944	100	100	100	100	100	100
1945	113.88	104.76	100.2	117.61	101.64	100.37
1946	110.64	95.14	104.4	368.92	100.98	105.52
1947	170.55	97.22	116.8	480.45	114.11	133.33
1948	212.93	98.61	132.3	227.34	114.72	151.74
1949	250.98	104.86	136.4	191.47	123.31	168.10
1950	233.19	108.31	137.8	371.50	119.63	164.83

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1951	224.97	115.52	143.30	110.78	123.07	176.48
1952	225.62	119.79	140.72	96.80	130.85	189.57
1953	268.77	117.76	144.73	98.12	143.87	189.37
1954	270.52	120.42	137.85	97.83	150.88	189.37
1955	277.92	123.47	130.98	165.28	165.53	200.00
1956	291.31	131.92	143.30	202.86	166.02	202.25
1957	304.37	137.99	151.47	186.50	159.87	210.22
1958	386.06	135.33	158.35	226.19	176.48	216.36
1959	466.99	144.13	165.08	163.41	171.93	217.78
1960	502.33	149.25	169.24	189.61	172.79	241.25
1961	513.85	155.35	171.96	142.68	176.85	256.43
1962	509.24	163.01	177.41	177.55	188.17	278.49
1963	471.47	173.12	182.85	94.81	205.28	293.31
1964	509.24	183.03	207.50	224.09	213.40	309.02
1965	571.86	187.55	226.56	179.10	217.10	342.72
1966	559.43	186.44	251.06	401.65	216.48	378.37
1967	576.59	188.74	285.17	497.40	218.20	417.90
1968	652.27	188.66	293.48	500.19	237.40	449.32
1969	623.07	190.29	290.61	552.55	260.29	459.20

Source : Column 2 : 1929 to 1950 : Karnik VB, Indian Trade Unions,  
A Survey, Appendix I, page 321.

1951 to 1969 : Indian Labour Statistics

Column 3 : 1929 to 1938 : Labour Year Book  
1939 to 1950 : Palekar SA, Real Wages in India.  
1950 to 1969 : Indian Labour Statistics

Column 4 : 1929 to 1950 : Singh VB, Economic History of  
India, 1857-1956, Table 5, p. 657.

1951 to 1969 : Indian Labour Statistics

- Column 5 : 1928 to 1950 : Karnik VB, Indian Trade Unions,  
A Survey, Appendix II, page 322.  
1951 to 1969 : Indian Labour Statistics
- Column 6 : 1929 to 1950 : Singh VB, Economic History of India,  
1857-1956, Table 5, p. 557 (The Index  
of base year 1939 has been adjusted  
to 1944)  
1951 to 1969 : Indian Labour Statistics
- Column 7 : 1929 to 1950 : Singh VB, Economic History of India,  
1857-1956, Table 5, p. 657.  
1951 to 1969 : Indian Labour Statistics

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FIGURE 1  
GROWTH TREND OF INDIAN TRADE UNIONS

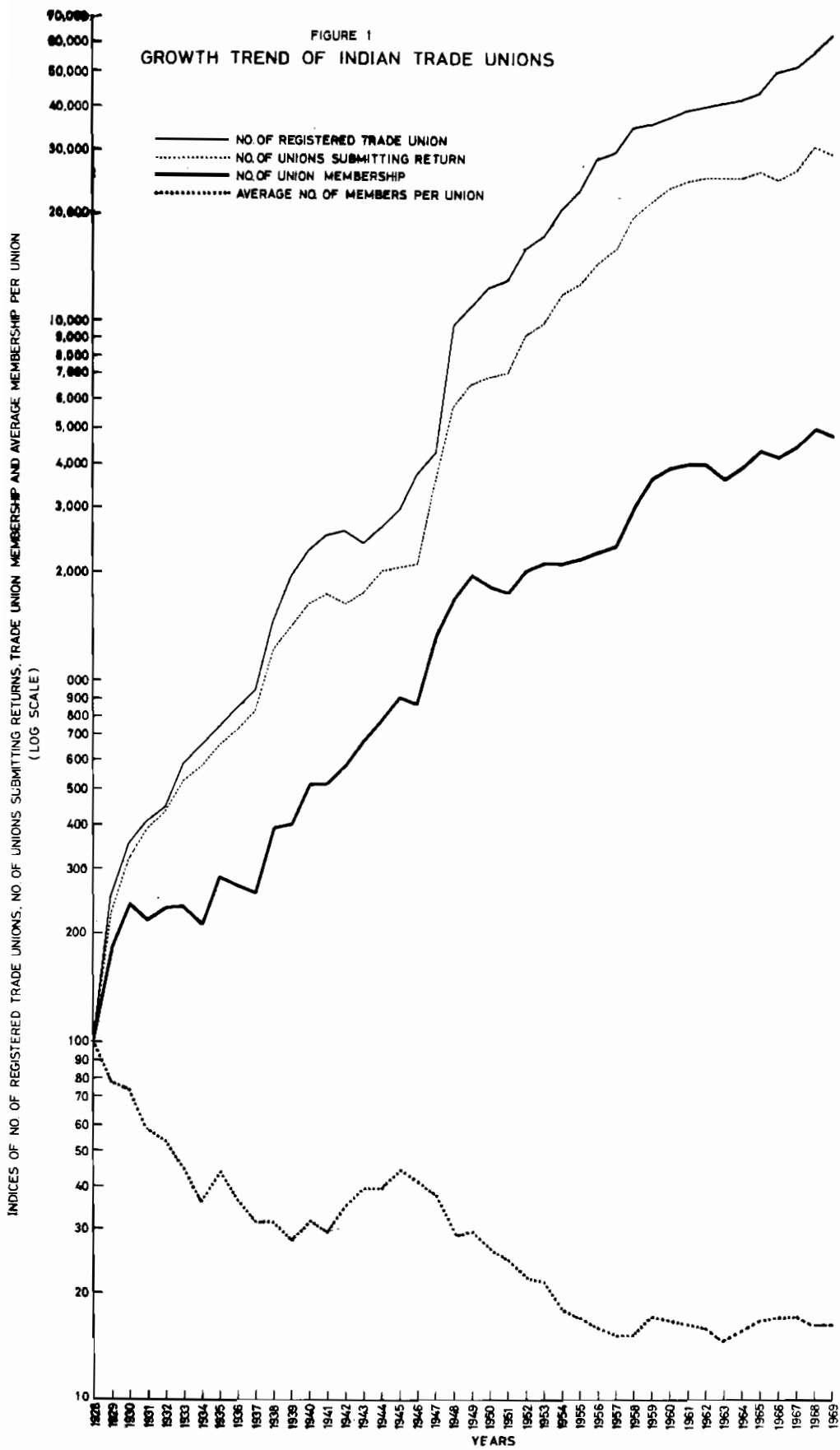
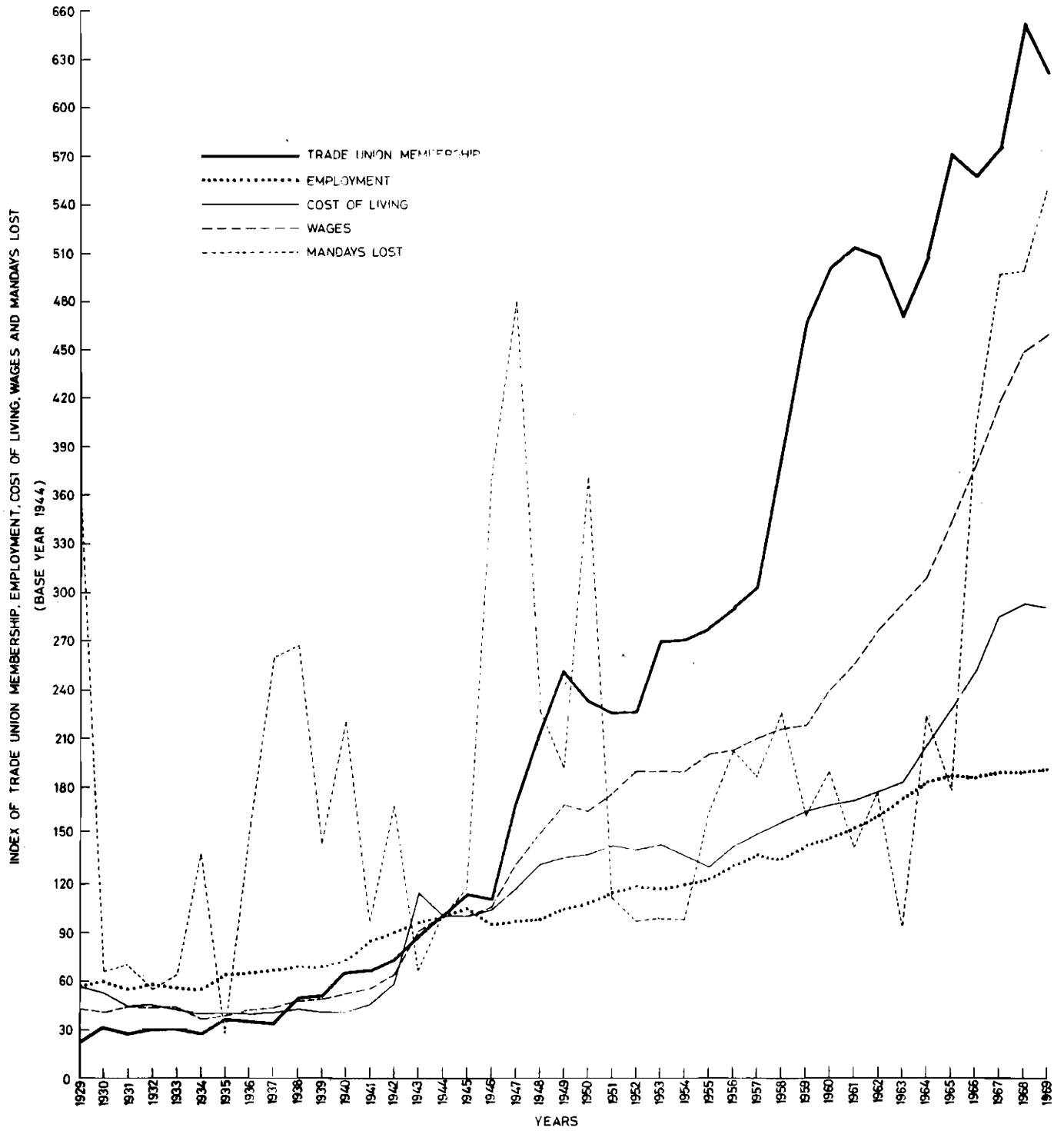


FIGURE 2  
 INDEX OF TRADE UNION MEMBERSHIP AND ASSOCIATED VARIABLE





## REFERENCES

- 1 The first cotton and jute mills were established in Bombay and Calcutta in 1851 and 1855 respectively. In this connection see, VB Singh "Trade Union Movement" in VB Singh (ed) Economic History of India 1857-1956, Bombay etc: Allied Publishers, 1965, p 563.
- 2 Reference may be made to Bharat Sramajibi published in Bengal in 1874 by Sashipada Banerjee and Dinabandhu published in Bombay in 1898 by NM Lohkunday. See Sukomal Sen, Working Class of India : History of Emergence and Movement, 1830-1970, Calcutta, KP Bagchi Co. 1977, pp 72-73.
- 3 VB Karnik, Indian Trade Unions : A Survey, Bombay : Manaktalas, 1966, p 7.
- 4 Ibid, p 25.
- 5 Ibid, p 25.
- 6 Report of the Royal Commission on Labour as quoted in VB Singh, op cit, p 570.
- 7 Jawaharlal Nehru, An Autobiography, Bombay etc : Allied Publishers, 1962, pp 186-187.
- 8 Sukomal Sen, op cit, p 295.
- 9 VP Singh, op cit, p 583.
- 10 Charles A Myers and Subbiah Kannappan, Industrial Relations in India, Bombay etc : Asia Publishing House, 1970, p 141.
- 11 Sukomal Sen op cit, p 370.
- 12 Ibid, p 382.
- 13 RG Soman as quoted in VB Karnik op cit, p 152.
- 14 VV Giri, Labour Problems in Indian Industry, Bombay etc: Asia, 1958, p 27.
- 15 Charles A Myers and Subbiah Kannappan op cit, p 144.
- 16 For details of the model and further results, see Pramod Verma, "Trade Unionism in India : A Statistical Analysis" (forthcoming).