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**POLITICAL AND INDEPENDENT UNIONS
AMONG THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS
OF
KERALA (INDIA)**

by

PAUL O. NALIETH

**A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in
partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy, The City University of New York**

1999

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract**POLITICAL AND INDEPENDENT UNIONS
AMONG
THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF KERALA, INDIA**

by

Paul O. Nalieth**Adviser: Professor Paul Attewell**

Survey data for this comparative study was collected from 635 unionized workers from four factories in the Eloor-Kalamassery industrial belt of Kerala, India, in 1994: Fertilizers and Chemicals Travancore, Indian Aluminum Company, Premier Tyres, and Hindustan Machine Tools. Along with two independent unions, three political unions – Center of Indian Trade Unions, Indian National Trade Union Congress, and Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh – were represented in the sample.

The unions were compared in terms of their members' social origins, ideological inclinations, economic orientation, party and union participation, satisfaction with unions, attitudes towards leadership, and preference for collective bargaining. The survey found that the majority of workers joined those unions which were sponsored by the political parties to which they had already belonged. The political unions shared the communal and religious as well as the ideological characteristics of those parties. However the majority of all union workers believed

that the chief function of union was to secure direct economic benefits to the workers, and not the realization of ideological ends. In other words, despite their political foundation, political unions behaved like economic unions.

Political union workers were found to participate more in party and union life compared to independent union workers. Unions showed different rates of political mobilization: some unions were more successful than others in adding new and maintaining current members of the corresponding party. Though workers were generally satisfied with their unions, they were greatly disenchanted with their external/political leaders. Workers across unions expressed fears about the new economic openness of Indian industry to the global market.

The Independent unions of Kerala might be an alternative to the fragmentation of workers in a plant into different political unions. But the survey yielded no evidence to show that the Independent union was a new model of union organizing that would replace the political union form. In the key areas of industrial relations like collective bargaining, state control of industry, and economic function of union, the political and independent unions were more similar than different.

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I dedicate this dissertation to the fond memory of my beloved parents who did not live to see the completion of this study.

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INTRODUCTION: TRADE UNIONS IN INDIA

Scholars of industrial relations have a long-standing interest in the structure and behavior of trades unions across the world. They try to understand the variations in union behavior, the different institutional settings where unions work, and the efficacy of unions in advancing their members' interests. Researchers based in Europe and America have repeatedly commented upon the differences between the unions in the west and those in the developing or third world countries. Several areas of contrast strike Western scholars as important.

1. Unions in developing countries often reflect ethnic or religious or caste differences in the larger society. Competing unions in any given industry attract a different ethnic or religious or social stratum. In the West, this tendency is often viewed as a symptom of backwardness because of the ideal that unions should represent everyone in a given work place or occupation, regardless of background. What James Ramsay MacDonald said about Indian trade unions in the early 20th century still seems to represent the Western view of today's third world unions: Indian labor unions are a cross between caste and "true" trade union organization.¹ Ironically, unionism in the West has not lived up to the ideal of secular union organization. The American labor movement has clearly been influenced by the social movement principles of Protestant Christian Socialism and Roman

Catholicism.² Catholic unions were formed in the United States in the wake of "Rerum Novarum" encyclical by Pope Leo XIII in 1891. These religious unions shared the church's condemnation of the evils of the socialists.³ Nor does domination of certain craft unions in the early part of American industrial history by ethnic Europeans fit the image of Western unions as totally secular and inclusive.

2. Unions in third world nations frequently have a political orientation. At the extreme they are seen as mere appendages of regional or national political parties, whose leadership is chosen from, or imposed by those parties. Such unions reflect the political needs of their associated parties and give political goals priority over the economic and work-place needs of their members. However, once again, political organizing of workers is characteristic many different Western countries. Right wing, Communist and socialist led unions exist in Europe today.

3. Perhaps because they are viewed as clients or agents of political parties, political unions in third world countries have been characterized as relatively ineffectual. When aligned with political parties in power, potential militance may be restrained by their political bosses. Or, because they compete with unions representing other political parties, they may lack solidarity and cohesion. N.R. Sheth writes, "...unions combine and split in terms of their ideological baggage and also in relation to their socio-political attitude toward the politicians in power at a given time."⁴ The major ideological orientations such as Gandhism, socialism, Marxism, and communalism (in India) are thought to divide unions at both national

and state levels. Political leaders of unions use the unions to mobilize votes for their party than for union action per se.

However, not all scholars take the view that political unions ineffectively represent workers in the third world. Ian Roxborough, in particular, argues that political unions of Mexico, for example, have been acting strongly and decisively on a number of occasions.⁵ Though many writers in India concede that trade unions led by different parties have improved the lot of the workers, all agree that the labor movement is fragmented by ideological polarization and that the political leaders of unions are primarily committed to developing their own political careers rather than their workers' concerns and the day to day affairs of their union.

4. The emergence in several developing countries of "independent unions" (that is, unions which are not affiliated with political parties) is seen as a rejection of the divisive nature of political unionism and therefore as a sign of maturity. Finally, the Western scholars also see that these countries are developing unions more in line with the Western model, unions whose main focus will be on defending the needs of their members. Such unions should have fewer of the perceived flaws of the political unions, being more militant and effective in work place struggles.

The major question that serves as the central issue for this dissertation is: Are the independent unions which have emerged alongside political unions really different from their political counterparts? If so, how do they differ? This question is answered by a study of both independent and political trade unions in the State of Kerala in South India. It presents newly-collected survey data on the

attitudes and backgrounds of industrial workers in four large factories in Kerala. Each of these factories contains several unions, some political, others independent.

Using this survey data, together with secondary sources, it asks whether

independent unions are different from political unions in terms of:

- a. the social origins and diversity of their membership.
- b. the attitudes of their membership, especially their view of what a union should do.
- c. the extent of member involvement in union activities.
- d. the extent of member involvement in political activities.
- e. the degree of satisfaction with the union and its leadership.

In addition to asking how independent unions differ from political ones, the dissertation examines the recruitment and selection process by which workers end up in a particular union. Also, it analyzes whether union members become more active by virtue of their involvement with unions. A related question raised is whether member participation in political activities enhances their union participation or limits it, and vice versa.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The majority of the industrial workers of India belong to trade unions affiliated with different political parties, and the industrial workers of Kerala, a South Indian State, are no exception. However, just as there are some models of Independent Unions in the industrial centers of the country, Kerala too presents examples of unions organized non-politically.

No major studies have been made of the phenomenon of independent unions of the country. Existing studies about trade unions in India can be categorized into two groups: legal and historical. The first type deals with the government's attempt to regulate industrial relations in the organized sectors of the economy. The second type consists of various subsets of studies: (a) those that describe the historical origins of the Indian labor movement, (b) those that trace the particular origins of different political parties and of the many trade unions generally attached to these parties or to their political ideologies,⁶ and (c) profiles of trade union leadership.

Clearly absent in the sociological literature on labor and unions is any serious study about the membership as such. Although it is generally believed that the members of each trade union are active members of the political party that controls the union leadership, documentary evidence for this claim is hard to come by. The few studies of the voting patterns of Indians do not shed light on how the union members in particular behave politically.⁷ One of the concerns of my study is to fill this gap.

A Brief History of Trade Unionism in India

Historians of Indian trade union movement divide its development into a number of stages⁸: the social welfare period, origins of actual unionism, communist domination of trade unions, post-independence developments, and recent trends.

Welfare Unionism

India never experienced an industrial revolution. Industrialization of certain centers in India was initiated, regulated and controlled by the British interests. By 1850 some level of industrialization was evident in major cities of the country. Though the

scale of industrialization was not impressive, the condition of labor in India was worse than in the early factories of Britain.⁹ The workers who came from the villages were generally unorganized and submissive, lacking any form of radicalism. The Indian Factories Act of 1881 restricted the employment of women and child labor in Indian industries. During this period, humanitarians like N.M. Lokhandey in Bombay advocated workers' interests by means of petitions and 'memorials' demanding adequate rest periods and disability benefits. He founded the Bombay Mill Hands Association in 1890. In subsequent years, unions of employees in railways, post and telegraph, and printing were established that were more like welfare and grievance redress organizations. These associations had a strong ethnic and caste character. Europeans and Anglo-Indians dominated the Railway unions (for example, the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants of India); the members of the Bombay Mill Hands Association were mostly from the backward Maratha communities.

Trade Union Period

During 1918-24, the leadership of the workers passed from social reformers to politicians.¹⁰ The negative effects of the World War and the intensification of the struggle for political independence from Britain created restlessness and a new spirit of defiance among workers. The Madras Textile Union, founded by B.P.Wadia in 1918 is considered the first trade union in the Western sense of the word. The first set of demands raised by Wadia and his union addressed the twin objectives of labor advancement and national independence: The specific issues were (1) improvement of working conditions and wages; (2) maltreatment of Indians by European Assistants.

The union adopted the techniques of collective bargaining and saw union as a vehicle of class struggle.

Mahatma Gandhi started his version of trade unionism among the mill hands of Ahmedabad: Ahmedabad Textile Labor Association in 1920 which adopted his ideology of truth and non-violence as a program of labor action. The first National Federation of local trade unions was established in Bombay in 1920 under the leadership of Lala Lajpat Rai for the main purpose of its representation at the International Labor Organization's conferences. The first national federation came to be known as All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), committed to labor organization for the sake of economic and social improvement and political freedom. At its inception AITUC had 125 local unions with an affiliated membership of 250,000.

Left-wing Unionism (1924-34)

The growing repression by the British of the Indian Independence movement and the falling real wages in the face of rising profits realized by the British companies created the climate for the radicalization of the leadership of trade unions and militant organizing of the workers. Labor strikes became frequent, long drawn and violent. The Communists gained new prestige among workers when several such leaders were arrested and jailed by the Government. The militant leaders and their supporters wanted AITUC to become aligned with the Third International (Muscovites) while the Rightists wanted AITUC to be affiliated with International Federation of Trade Unions (Amsterdam Group). This indeed was a period of disunity, but also a time of intense politicization and radicalization of labor. The ideological rift among the leadership resulted in the formation of a more moderate splinter union under the leadership of

N. M. Joshi: All India Trade Union Federation (AITUF). The AITUF found the ideological position of the communist elements in the AITUC unacceptable.

Unity Period (1935-1938)

The disunity among labor proved very costly, and there was no strong response to the loss of employment and reduction in wages in the early years of the decade. Efforts toward unifying the movement found a measure of success in 1938. Much of the disunity was caused because of the political differences among the leaders about British imperialism and their vision for the future of a free India. Leaders had to agree that no political decision would be taken by the unions unless it commanded a two-thirds majority. The All India Trade Union Federation merged with the AITUC.

II World War Period (1939-1945)

World War II affected the Indian trade union movement in peculiar ways. The rival political factions in the AITUC had conflicting views about India's role in the war effort. One group rallied behind the principle that the AITUC should support Britain's anti-fascist stand irrespective of the British reluctance to free India from their colonial grip. The other group argued that the war was only an imperialist one, and that India should not support Britain. The Communist faction that opposed Britain in the beginning became its supporters after Hitler invaded Russia in 1941. By 1942 India's struggle for independence turned intense in the form of a vigorous "Quit India" project against the British. The "Quit India" agitation was led mainly by the Congress leaders, who also provided the leadership to the Congress faction of the AITUC. The British Government jailed them. The leaders of the Communist faction basically controlled the AITUC, and it slowly became an organization with a clear Communist orientation. By

the end of the war, Indian Unions had gained enough power and numbers to participate in negotiations with the employers from a position of strength.

Post-Independence Era (1947-1977)

In May 1947 Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) was founded by those in the AITUC who did not share the radical ideology of the Communist leadership. The new Union, influenced by pro-Gandhian ideas, became affiliated with the International Federation of Free Trade Unions, and quickly grew into the more representative union of the Indian workers. Ideologically, it was against "any antisocial concentration of power in any form", while AITUC espoused the goal of total state control of Industry.

Just as efforts towards trade union cooperation seemed to be succeeding, fragmentation based on political ideology reemerged in the Indian trade union movement. A major rift occurred in the AITUC in 1970 when the Indian Communist leadership split over the issue of Russo-Chinese differences in the interpretation of Marxism. The AITUC came under the control of the pro-Soviet Communist Party of India (CPI) and the new pro-Chinese Communist Party Marxist (CPM) started a new central trade union organization: Center of Indian Trade Unions (CITU).

During the political 'emergency' declared by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in the mid-Seventies, several union actions were crushed. But the union movement as a whole reaped the benefit of forgetting their political differences in the joint opposition to the political emergency and the attendant repression of labor rights. The major labor unions combined with the employers' representatives to form the National Apex Body to address national issues of industrial relations. This period also

gave rise to the formation of new political alliances, which changed the political future of the country after the emergency was lifted.

Major Political Parties and Labor Unions in India Today

Trade unions in India have become part of the social, political and economic life of the country: they are neither ad-hoc groups nor strike committees nor caste welfare associations. They have come to enjoy great legal protection and are formidable vehicles of political protest and social transformation. Two major developments in the last two decades need to be mentioned. First, the economic liberalization and the consequent emphasis on private investment and productivity are making new demands on the way unions behave. They must be more concerned with productivity issues and quality standards that a globalizing economy requires of the industry. Secondly, a new political climate exists in which a Hindu nationalist party has become powerful and has formed its own national trade union organization. The new party is Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the union is Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS). The effects of these developments are still unclear, and one can not yet predict how the trade union movement in India will be shaped by them. The three national trade unions surveyed in the study are Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), Center of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), and Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS). A brief discussion of the parties and their unions follow. India has a multiparty system with some peculiar features of its own. Today there are many parties in India, some of which are very powerful in certain regions, but none of them powerful enough to capture the majority of seats in the national parliament to form the central government. That was not the case before 1977. The Indian

National Congress party dominated the electoral scene like a giant making Indian politics a “one party dominant system”, or “one party democracy”. Over the years, a movement from “one party” to “one party dominance” to “competitive dominance” to a true multiparty system has occurred in India.

The Congress party was founded in 1855. Its history is truly the history of the freedom struggle. It spearheaded the national movement that dislodged the British colonial rule. When the British decided to transfer power, the Indian National Congress party was in the best position as the representative body to assume charge. It remained in power continuously for 30 years when a multiparty opposition replaced it in the central parliament.

The party was highly influenced by Nehru’s concepts of socialism. His ideals of secular democracy with no state religion or second class citizenship became the ideals of the Congress party. The party promised a strong activist government that would end the age-old social oppression of the masses, a controlled economy, with a public sector of state owned industries and utilities to combat mass poverty. In short, it believed in economic socialism, political democracy, and secular nationalism. It is a party of consensus and compromises. Hence the party did not have a well defined ideological content.

The Communist Party Marxist (CPM) came to existence in 1964 as a result of a split in the original Communist Party of India (CPI). Though it is organized as a national party its power base in India is limited to the states of West Bengal, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Tripura. At the time of the split, the CPM was pro-Chinese form of communism, and the CPI leaned towards the Soviet form. Center

of Indian Trade Unions is sponsored by the more dominant CPM. It permits internal democracy, facilitating free debate within the party. Once the leadership decides on a policy or program the members are expected to go along without dissent. It follows the Marxist-Leninist thought. CPM competes in representative elections and participates in left-wing coalitions in regional governments. The party is convinced that it has to chart its own course of revolutionary action in India, and that India's revolutionary movement would have to be different from those of China's or Russia's. The CPM considers itself the political party of the working class. It is committed to the defense of the immediate interests of the workers and peasants as well as other sections of the people suffering under the capitalist, feudal or imperialist exploitation.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came into existence in 1979 after the disintegration of the Janata Party. Jana Sangh was one of the constituent parties that came together in 1977 to form Janata Party which ousted the Indian National Congress at the polls. Janata Party with Jana Sangh as the leading member, transformed itself to be the Bharatiya Janata Party which has been in power in India since 1997.¹¹

The party's ideological objective is to rebuild India on the basis of Hindu cultural nationalism. The party leaders insist that the national ideal the party seeks to establish is based not on Hindu religious principles but on Hindu cultural values. The BJP promises to establish a society based on 'integral humanism' which guarantees equality of opportunity and liberty to all citizens. Their economic ideas are not very clear. They support the new economic openness of India to world

markets. The party believes in maximizing production without any substantial change in the existing structure of management and ownership. Their political discourse is replete with promises of decentralization of power. In final analysis, though the party has professed to be democratic and secular, observers conclude that the ideological foundations of the party are religious and isolationist.

Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC)

The INTUC evolved from the All India Trade Union Congress in 1948.

The objectives of the new union were expressed in rather vague ideological terms: to place industry under national ownership and control in a suitable form. Promotion of the social, civic and political interests of the working class was high on its agenda.

The pre-eminent objective was to establish a social order free from hindrances to an all round development of its individual members. The INTUC believes in gradual transformation of the social order. Class conflict was not seen as the basis for employee-employer relationship. The Gandhian philosophy of co-trusteeship, truth and "sarvodaya" (general welfare) has influenced its principles and approaches to industrial relations. The leadership of the union has been provided by the political leaders of the Indian National Congress, nationally, regionally and in the local plant branches.

Center of Indian trade Unions (CITU)

The second national trade union of interest is the CITU, an offshoot of the AITUC. In 1970 the Communist Party of India split into two: the faction loyal to the Chinese model of the party called themselves the Communist Party-Marxist (CPM); while the traditionalists of the Russian dogma continued to be known under the old name: Communist Party of India (CPI). The AITUC sponsored by the original

Communist Party also split on factional lines. CITU is the trade union arm of the CPM, and AITUC that of the CPI. The CITU stands for socializing all means of production, distribution and exchange and establishing a socialist State. It began by demanding nationalization of all foreign monopoly concerns and India's big industrial firms.

Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS)

The Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) is not sponsored by a political party like other political trade unions. Historically, BMS precedes the Bharatiya Janata party, BJP; BMS was established in 1954 as a result of resolution passed in a Jana Sangh convention held in Bhopal. As a political party, Jana Sangh was the precursor of the recently popular BJP. This party that came to national power in 1997 is a Hindu Nationalist Party. In an article published in The Observer in 1996¹², it was stated that “the BMS, unlike other trade unions, does not claim a formal affiliation with any political party”. But the leaders of the union agree that their trade union movement is ‘firmly committed to the ethos of Hinduism – a philosophy to which the Bharatiya Janata Party has a deep commitment.’

BMS holds as its major aim to establish a classless society in which full employment should be secured for all. Nationalism is pre-eminent in its statement of objectives. Trade union is seen as medium of service to the motherland irrespective of religions and political affinities. Their ideological basis, known as the triple formula, seeks to (1) nationalize the labor, (2) laborize the industry, and (3) industrialize the nation. It implies the union’s commitment to make workers partners in the process of national integration, and to secure a major role for the workers in industrializing the nation. It rejects state control and believes in the creation of autonomous industrial

communities, with each one of them consisting of all the individuals – workers, managers, and owners -- connected with the industry as partners. It may not be coincidental that BMS avoids the use of "caste" in its discourse. The acceptance of Hindutva, the orthodox vedic principles of Hinduism, is central to the party and its union. The division of Hindu society into different castes, or “varnas” has the sanction of the Hindu scriptures. To the followers of the vedic orthodoxy, a better society may be a classless society but not necessarily a casteless one.

Independent Unions

The Independent trade unions surveyed here do not have ‘one’ history. The leading independent union in the Eloor industrial belt has been formed in the Fertilizers and Chemicals Travancore factory on August 15, 1947, on the very day of Indian independence from the British Raj. FACT Employees Association was formally registered as an independent union on January 16, 1948. This was not a ‘category’ union, and represented *all* employees of the FACT factory. In its memorandum presented to the Prime Minister of Travancore (before the State of Kerala was formed), the major demand was for a wage increase.¹³ The economic orientation of the new independent union was evident from its inception. The association also asked the Provincial Government to nationalize the factory.

Until 1963, FACT Employees Association was the only labor union in the factory. Two ‘category’ (trade) unions were established in that year. But later, two of the FACT unions -- CITU led by the Communists, and HMS sponsored by the Janata Party -- joined the original independent association. The idea of independent unionism eventually spread to the nearby factories, resulting in a few plant unions. Some of

these independent unions share the same external leadership as the FACT Employees Association. A parallel development of independent unionism occurred in Bombay in the seventies. However, these independent unions do not effectively communicate, and thus have not developed a centralized strategy.

A Brief History of Unionism in Kerala

Unions were first organized among the plantation workers of Kerala. The first commercial cinnamon plantation was established by the British East India Company in 1797 in the Malabar region of Kerala. Eventually other types of plantations -- rubber, tea, coffee, pepper, cardamom, nutmeg, coconut -- were started by foreign investors and a few local planters. The first textile factory in Kerala was established by the German Missionaries of the Basel Mission in 1851. Cashew nut processing factories and timber depots were added to the industrial map by the end of the 19th century.

The coir (coconut fiber) industry in the coastal areas of Alleppey saw the first signs of union organization in Kerala. During the period following the First World War, the coir industry was plagued by low wages, closure of units, and growing unemployment. P. K. Bava, the ward superintendent ("Mooppan") of a coir factory organized the discontented workers of the industry and brought them under the Travancore Labor Association on March 31, 1922.

The history of industrial disputes in Kerala goes back to 1938 when the first general strike was held by workmen in the coir industry under the leadership of Travancore Coir Factory Workers Union. The Travancore Disputes Act was passed in the same year, and a Board of Conciliation was set up to investigate the disputes. Some of the demands by the TCFWU were the following: (1) Increase the basic rates of wages by 25%; (2) Standardization

of wage rates; (3) Improvement of working conditions; (4) Guaranteed minimum wage for workers; (5) Abolition of contract labor (6) Prohibition of unauthorized deductions from wages. This general strike lasted for 26 days and involved 3,000 workers. An allowance of 6 1/2 % of the basic wages was given to the workers. This result was a pioneering success of the T.C.F.W.U.

Since then, the coir industry, with relatively enlightened employers and powerful trade unions, has spearheaded the development of industrial relations practices in Kerala. This was a natural development because the coir industry was the most organized sector with an abundant supply of laborers and the availability of able outside leadership. The destinies of these first unions were ably guided by R. Sugathan, P.N.Krishna Pillai and T.V. Thomas.

The structure of T.C.F.W.V. was very simple and operationally sound. It set up a Factory Committee in each coir Factory that discussed the day to day problems with the management. In practice, it was similar to the modern works committee. One of the workers' representatives of the Factory Committee would represent the union of that particular factory in the Executive Body of the T.C.F.W.V. With its head office in Alleppey, the T.C.F.W.V. executive committee had two functions to discharge: grievance settlement and collective bargaining.

After the successful intervention of the T.C.F.W.V. the average worker in those days collected Rs.40/-per week -- i.e., in 1930's. In 1939, the membership was 7,481. The rate of subscription was 7 paise per month. The initiation fee was fixed at 15 paise. By 1944, the membership reached a phenomenal 17,010. This accounted for 90% of all the coir industrial workers in Alleppey and nearby places.

One of the goals of the union was to educate the workers and to make them aware of their rights. The Executive Committee consisted of a President, two Secretaries, and 42 elected members. The latter represented 42 “wards” of the union. The union had paid staff to work along with the leaders. The monthly expenditure has been estimated at Rs.400.00. Besides the membership fees, donations also were received.

Another location of industrial advancement and consequent union growth was Quilon. The leaders who were in the forefront of the Travancore State Congress, formed in 1938, were also the architects of union movement in this region. The working conditions of the Cashew workers were deplorable¹⁴. The Cashew factories, where hundreds of women were working, were without urinals and latrines. Young women were sexually exploited, and the mode of punishment was crude and inhuman. To protest against these conditions the employees of the Indian Nut Company of Kollam (To the British, Kollam was Quilon) began a strike on 12th August 1938. “Even though the strike was suppressed, it inspired the workers in other Cashew factories. A major strike took place in 1939 in the Musaliar Industries involving 2000 workers against the dismissal of some male workers. The management yielded to the pressure of the striking workers, and the dismissal was withdrawn.”¹⁵

After this historic strike, the first trade union in Quilon was formed in 1939: All Travancore Cashewnut Workers’ Union (ATCWU). This union was later revived in the early 40’s by the Communist leaders from Alleppey like K.C. Govindan Nair, P. K. Krishna Pillai, and M. N. Govindan Nair. Because of the

anti-Communist sentiments that prevailed at the time, many of these leaders were put in prison while others had to go underground. Some of these leaders eventually became the pioneers of the Communist party and left-wing unions in the state. A major general strike was declared in Quilon, in 1945, by the ATCWU seeking workers' rights like basic minimum wages, cost of living allowance and bonus. The Government intervened very quickly and granted wages for all strike days as annual bonus. Since then strikes became frequent for both bonuses and wages. In 1950 ATCWU was renamed All Kerala Cashew Factory Workers' Federation (AKCFWF).

When trade unionism was growing fast in the Travancore region, Cochin too, had its share of unionization. Toddy Tappers' Union was one of the earliest unions in this region state, in 1936. The Tata Oil Mill Worker's Union was registered in 1939. In the 1940's strike activity was confined to the Tata Oil Mill, Port Trust, and some brick and tile factories in and around Alwaye. On the very day of inauguration of the Tata Oil Mill, the union staged a sit down strike in the soap plant protesting the manager's decision to discharge a few workmen for a day's absence from the plant. This strike spread to the entire factory. A settlement was reached by which it was agreed that disciplinary actions would be taken only by the General Manager of the plant, not the superintendent.

Tata Oil Mill Workers' Union resorted to strike and "peaceful picketing" only when they believed they were unavoidable. The Union leadership took pains to convince the workers that a strike was not always necessary to win demands. The collective bargaining system was coming of age in this part of the state.

In 1942, when the Quit India Movement was initiated, Tata Mill Workers' Union, under the leadership of Panampilly Govida Menon, joined the national freedom struggle by protesting against the arrest of Mahatma Gandhi.

At this time the Cochin State Government, using a Criminal Law Amendment, restricted organized political movements. A protest march led by Mathai Manjooram and M.T. Menon went to the Cochin Legislature and took control of it. The leaders declared the dismissal of the Government and announced the establishment of a "Popular Government of Cochin" with Mr. Mathai Majooran as "Prime Minister". The Maharaja (King) and the Diwan (Administrator) were taken by surprise by the turn of events and did not dare to arrest the leaders. When he was the leader of the Tata Oil Mill Workers' Union, Mathai Manjooran had had to go underground on several occasions. During his fifteen years of leadership, issues like wage increase, shift allowance, uniforms, sick leave and other benefits came under the purview of collective bargaining.

There can be little question but that the trade union movement and the emergence of Communism in the state were both part of the national freedom struggle. A progressive group emerged in the State Congress of Kerala, with M.M. Govindan Nair as the leader. They stood for mobilizing workers through trade unionism to aid the freedom struggle. However, this leadership was not fully satisfied with either the Gandhian approach of non-violence or with the positions of the Indian National Congress on labor issues. A radical wing of the Congress emerged under T.V. Thomas. This group favored bloody revolution for freedom from foreign powers and for economic equality. E.M.S. Nambootiripad's Youth

League aligned with this group. Eventually EMS's Youth League, M.N. Govindan Nair's Progressive Youth of the State Congress, and the radical faction of T. V. Thomas came together marking the emergence of the Communist Party in Kerala. They spearheaded a separate strategy for liberation. The stage was set for the negotiations between the Communist Party and the trade unions in Kerala which resulted in strengthening both the movements.

These political developments had immediate as well as far reaching implications for trade unionism. The All Travancore Trade Union Congress became a platform for the extreme leftists of the Communist Party. The Communist Party's stand concerning the Second World War was not totally accepted by all in the party. The radicals under T. V. Thomas hoped that independence struggle would further the 'communist revolution'.

The Communist party began to take active interest in the workers and students. The Diwan (King's Administrator) issued a warning against the party charging it with in anti-government activities. All eyes of Kerala were on Alleppey, the center of Communist thought and action. This active Communist stand of trade unionism led to the infamous Punnapra-Vayalar blood bath of 1946. In September 1946, the workers in Alleppey declared a general strike, which, as many expected, turned violent in many places. The police and the employees clashed and the employers were not spared. One employer, anticipating strong and violent reprisal against his life and property, requested police protection, readily granted by the Government. A contingent of State Reserve Police camped at Punnapra in Alleppey. The show of strength by police was, however, misconstrued. The

workers thought that the police had come to break up their union movement and decided to meet force with force. They clashed and surprisingly the police got the worst of it. This event in turn substantiated the Governments' suspicion that the workers and the Communists were in fact preparing for a revolt. On 22nd October, 1946, the birth day of the Maharajah (King) of Travancore, the bloodiest of armed conflicts, a battle between the organized workers and the police, occurred in Alleppey. The workers were fully mobilized and had been meticulously trained in advance for armed revolt. They used sickles, and lances made out of the trunk of arecanut tree against the police and the employer who had sought police protection. Punnapra and Vayalar became a battlefield where bullets, bayonets and boots of police clashed with sickles and lances of agitating workers. Many a precious life was lost on both sides!

After the blood bath of Punnapra, many leaders and sympathizers of the Communist Party had to go underground, since Communist activities in Kerala were banned. But Communist influence did not dwindle at all. As one song would put it, "from each drop of blood shed at Punnapra a thousand new lives" erupted. Punnapra–Vayalar tragedy became a test case of trade union strength and an important milestone in the history of the workers' movement in the State. At the same time, a parallel development was taking place in the new industrial center of Kerala in the form of "Independent Unionism" of Alwaye.

By 1940 Alwaye had become a major industrial center in the State. Alwaye was different from the rest of the state both in terms of the kinds of industries established there and the work force. More modern and sophisticated

industries of Kerala were started here. Hindustan Machine Tools, Fertilizers and Chemicals Travancore, Indian Aluminum Company, etc. are situated in Alwaye Eloor industrial belt. The first generation of these industrial workers was more skilled and educated. Many of them came from the middle classes of land-owning families. As explained above in the section on independent union, they were not affiliated with any central trade union organization. Members were not involved in politics as union members, and thus were free to follow their own individual party preferences.

In Alwaye, the independent union was guided by K.N. Gopala Pillai and S.C.S. Menon. Both of them were employees of Fertilizers and Chemicals Travancore, Limited. They organized the Alwaye Trade Union Council, which was instrumental in checking the All India Trade Union Council's growing influence in the region. Though Alwaye Trade Union Council had a premature death, the idea of independent unionism caught on, and has become a major presence among the industrial workers of the area. All the major industries in the region have independent unions.

The Communist governments in Kerala have shaped the growth of union movement in the state. When T. V. Thomas was the Labor Minister, he set up the Coir Industrial Relations Council. Under the successive left-wing governments, a labor-friendly political culture took root in the state. By the sixties, Kerala trade unions had established themselves as part of the social system. With the multiplicity of factions and splinter groups, political unions also grew in number.

Today Kerala is truly a land of unions. Of the 40,000 registered trade unions of India, 9665 operate in Kerala. Keralites are just 3.5% of the Indian population, and yet, have 25% of the registered trade unions.¹⁶ There are probably too many trade unions with too few members in each. This situation reflects the national scene in which the multiplicity of political parties has produced a profusion of associated labor unions. Until 1947, All India Trade Union Congress was the only national union organization in India. INTUC was formed that same year. HMS was registered in 1948. UTUC, BMS and UTUC-Lenin Way, came next. In 1964 the Communist Party of India split, and CITU was formed in 1967 as the union of the pro-Chinese Communist Party (Marxist). In Kerala, a Marxist splinter was formed from the original CPM party under the name CMP. CMP organized its own new trade union by the name AICTU: The All India Communist Trade Union, national in name, local in reality, and very small in numbers! Kerala has its own locals of a number of other national unions like AIRF, INR Congress, AIBEA, BEFI, AIBOF, General Insurance Employees Federation, Life Insurance Employees Federation, and Life Insurance Employees Congress.¹⁷

The predominance of both Communist-linked unions and independent unions distinguishes the Kerala industrial labor movement from the national scene. The factories surveyed in his study are representative of this unique situation.

2

METHODOLOGY

In this section, the purpose of the study and the method of data collection will be explained, as well as the study design and execution, the hypotheses, the logic of interpretation, and a review of the literature.

Statement of the Problem

All the political trade unions of India believe that economic goals are one of their fundamental functions. Yet their divergent political ideologies affect their economic strategies in very distinctive ways. The study proposes that the emergence non-political, independent unionism is a movement away from the traditional strategy of organizing labor around political ideologies. It examines the political and independent unions, compares them with respect to their ideological and instrumental orientation, the social origins of their membership, their differential relationship with political parties, their emergent attitudinal and behavioral changes in the wake of new 'economic openness' in the country, and changing attitudes to their unions and leadership.

Working Hypotheses

The research can be defined in terms of the following hypotheses:

- 1. Political affiliation of industrial workers typically predates their employment history.*

2. *Trade union selection of the industrial workers is often a function of their party allegiance.*
3. *Selection by individuals of a political party to support is associated with certain social and communal characteristics of the individual.*
4. *Different trade union organizations of India hold different ideological positions regarding union function.*
5. *Indian trade unions perform like economic unions even as they fulfill important political and social roles in a still evolving democratic polity.*
6. *Independent unions are more committed to economic goals than do political unions.*
7. *The membership of independent unions participate more actively in their unions than in their political parties.*
8. *The membership of independent unions participate more in their unions than their counterparts in politically affiliated unions.*
9. *There is high degree of disenchantment among union members with regard to their top leaders (e.g. presidents of unions).*
10. *There is high degree of disenchantment among rank-and-file union members with regard to union leaders who are politically active in parties.*

11. Workers experience strong fears regarding their job security in the wake of the new economic liberalization policy of the Central Government.

Overall Model

Kerala is a highly politicized state: many national political trends begin there. Highly polarized ideological camps vie for power within the electoral framework provided by the Indian Constitution. Political participation by people is high. When the Congress party was continuously in power at the central government and in the vast majority of states, Kerala alternately elected the communist party and the congress party to run the state. Political education begins early in the life of a Keralite. High school elections to the student Parliament are conducted purely on the basis of party sponsorship of student organizations. The field of labor in Kerala is no exception to this pervasive influence of politics.

Certain socio-religious factors are probably a significant influence on the choice of political parties by people of the state. Employees of industries in the state bring their political sympathies to their work settings where they embrace the (labor) union sponsored or supported by their political party. Unions play a role in maintaining the loyalty of existing members of the party, and also mobilize new workers for the sponsoring party. Even while party dominance continues to operate in the choice of unions, the parallel trend of independent non-political unionism offers a choice to workers: to organize around commonly agreed notions of union functions and without political or ideological commitments. Political union organization and independent union organization are the two models examined here. Because of their transitional

nature these two models of union organization are not totally autonomous, since each has distinctive characteristics, but at the same time incorporates certain features of the other model. Among the forces that drive this transition are the workers' disenchantment with the older models of union organization, demands of the global economy, and the resulting evolution toward a labor-capital accord¹⁸ in the 'mixed' model of Indian economy. The first and the last of these factors are assessed from opinions and attitudes shared by the employees across political parties and unions. The demands of the global economy are assumed to be evident in the economic openness introduced by the Indian Government in the form of denationalization of certain industries, greater participation in the global market, wider acceptance of GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) regulations and ISO (International Organization for Standardization) quality standards.

Though India is not as open to the global market as many other developing countries, its labor is not immune to the effect of 'interpenetration'¹⁹ of markets, a chief characteristic of the global economy.

Politically, India has a multi-party system. A number of political parties in India are more communally based than ideologically defined. The national parties pride themselves by the claim that they are above such sectarian membership bases and truly represent a "secular" population. Do industrial trade unions also reflect the truth of this claim or do they still show caste and community cleavages? Are they still what J.R. MacDonald described as something between caste and true trade union organization?²⁰

My study is one of the membership of the different major trade unions in Kerala. In this survey of opinions and attitudes, the guiding questions are the following:

Who joins which trade union? Does party membership determine union selection? Does union membership lead to political party membership and activism? Are there union activists who are not politically committed? Are there major differences in the way members of different trade unions participate in union and party activities? What are the socio-economic characteristics that are associated with the membership of each union? Do the members perceive their union primarily as an economic or political organization? In other words, are Indian political unions showing signs of becoming economic unions? How do the so-called independent²¹ unions manage their members' political differences as they work within one organization?

We are interested in such exploratory questions, because empirical answers to these questions have not been available. A survey of this magnitude is sure to yield original data concerning the issues outlined above. Existing knowledge on the subject is provided from the perspective of union leaders, the majority of whom are politicians of different parties. This survey draws on workers for its data.

Review of Literature

The theoretical backdrop for our analysis is provided by the comparative literature that deals with the emergence of trade unions in the West and in the "newly developing" countries" of Asia and Africa. Many of these discussions revolve around a comparison between the political nature of unions in the Asian-African countries compared to the economic orientation of the Western trade unions. Since this study is focussed on the workers' membership in political parties and in politically based trade unions, a survey of issues like the origins of trade union movement in India,

politicization of labor movement, interactions between the party and the union, dependence of unions on Government, is useful and necessary.

Kassalow (1969) identifies the striking fact that in most of the newly developing areas, political modernization and economic modernization are proceeding side by side. All social groups in such societies are stressed by this double feature. Trade unions are no exception. They tend to incorporate a specific agenda of social reconstruction and an economic program for the whole country. This places the unions right in the midst of political processes in a democratic state. India has a multiplicity of political parties and all major parties sponsor, support, or control their own trade union organizations.

The majority of Indian writers emphasize the inevitability of the emergence of political unionism in India. In countries like India, the unions were part of the nationalist struggle for independence from the colonial powers. Leaders of the national freedom movement saw in the trade unions, however minimally developed they were, an organized force for agitation.

Millen (1963) writes of the working alliance between unions and nationalist parties that developed in societies where workers lacked citizenship rights. When such rights were denied for the great majority of society as in colonial India, Millen observes that the political sweep was even more irresistible.

The political nature of trade unions was amplified by still another factor. Many of the colonized countries did not have any significant native owner-manager middle class. Industry was owned by foreigners, and the native labor naturally took on more than economic goals. Wipper (1964) makes the same observations regarding union

development in West Africa during the French colonial period. The mingling of political (anti-colonial protest) and economic (work related issues) interests is highly visible in the history of Indian trade union movement.

According to Mamoria and Mamoria (1992) the first Indian trade union in the modern sense of the term, was formed in Madras Textile Mill by B.P. Wadia in 1918. Both political and economic demands were part of the union goals at the inception of union movement in India. The study will examine how the twin orientation has survived or became modified in the different political and nonpolitical trade unions of Kerala.

There is a general perception that political unions of the developing countries are simply an extension of the major political party organizations and thus are not primarily or “really” interested in purely economic issues arising from working conditions. Worse, such unions are seen as ineffective in the furtherance of labor's economic interests. An exception to this general line of argument is Ian Roxborough's (1984) study of Automobile labor unions of Mexico as mentioned earlier. He argues that the traditional understanding of Latin American Unions as weak bargaining agents should be reexamined in the light of the emerging independent unions in Mexico. One of the criticisms leveled against Indian unions is that they are party or state controlled. The independent union movement in India has not been adequately represented in the literature.

Much of the literature deals with the reasons for the emergence of political unionism in the newly developing countries. But the question why or how they are sustained today is not being adequately addressed in these discussions. The writings

generally take the stand that political unionism is a phase in line with economic and industrial backwardness of a country and that “purer”, ie., non-political, forms of unions would emerge in time. Our assumption, though, in this study is that the political form of unions in India will endure along with the independent unions with or without political patronage for a long time to come.

Definitions

1. Political Union: Industrial workers' unions which are formally affiliated with Central Trade Union Organizations, which in turn are formally linked to political parties. For example, Hindustan Machine Tools Employees Union is a political union of the HMT factory. It is affiliated with the Center of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), which in turn maintains formal relations with the Marxist Communist Party of India.

2. Independent Union: Industrial workers' unions which call themselves by that name. In this study, a union is considered 'independent' if it is not affiliated to a Central Trade Union Organization, which has links to a political party. This does not imply that the individual members do not have any political leanings. In fact a typical independent union has members who belong to different political parties and sympathize with different political ideologies. Although an independent union may have its substantial majority of members belonging to a particular party, there is no public and official link with the party.

3. Central Trade Union Organizations: These are the national or state level affiliating agencies to which the local unions are attached. Generally all political parties have such central offices. For example, Indian National Trade Union Congress is the

central trade union office of the Indian National Congress Party; CITU is the central trade union office of the CPM.

4. Registered Trade Union: A particular union in a factory is registered before the Registrar of Trade Unions (Government machinery under Indian Trade Unions Act, 1926), and is usually affiliated with a party's central trade union office. There are a few cases in evidence where the factory union is organized on party lines, and yet, does not seek affiliation with the party's central union organization. According to the Indian Trade Unions Act, a group of seven or more workers of an undertaking can come together to form a union, with many rights before the law. Generally a factory would have many registered unions of various sizes, all enjoying equal legal rights and protections.

5. Recognized Unions: Recognized unions are those registered labor unions of a factory, recognized by the employer to represent workers in the collective bargaining process. There is no national legislation that lays down the criteria for recognition of unions. Instead, the Code of Discipline, promulgated in 1958, provides a set of guidelines for the purpose. All unions in a factory would not be, and need not be, recognized by the management, though any union can stake their claim for recognition. A union claiming such status should have been functioning for at least one year after registration. The membership of that union should cover at least 15% of the workers in the establishment. Membership would be counted only of those who have paid their union subscription for at least three months during the period of six months immediately preceding the reckoning. When a union has been recognized, there should be no change in its (recognition) status for a period of two years. All the unions covered in the survey are registered (with the Government), and recognized (by the employer).

6. External Leaders of Union: Those in leadership position in the factory union but who are not workers of the factory. The general pattern for the unions in this study is that the position of President is held by a non-worker of the factory. Distinguished external leaders hold the leadership of many local unions at the same time. With very few exceptions the external leaders are politically active and hold legislative positions (Members of State Legislative Assembly, Members of Union Parliament).

7. Internal Leaders: These are local leaders who are workers of the factory, and members of the union. They function as Vice President, General Secretary, Treasurer, and as Executive Members. If they are politically active, they might also be holding offices in the party organization outside the factory - at local, state or national level.

8. Industrial Workers: All the workers of 14 major companies in the industrial belt of Eloor-Kalamassery (Kerala, India) who constitute the population of the study. All the factories are manufacturing or chemical processing units. They are owned by the central Government, state Government or by private corporations.

METHODOLOGY

Tools of data collection

Questionnaires distributed among a representative sample of industrial workers are the main source of data for analysis. Documentary evidence of the ideological stand of each union and the related political party has been gathered from electronic and print media. Some interviews with knowledgeable company officials and union leaders were also conducted to elicit information on workers' behavior in general and on issues of concern to the unions in particular. The questionnaire revolves around the

eleven hypotheses suggested earlier. The list of 90 original variables and the computed variables is appended as Appendix II.

Measurement of Concepts (Guide to Framing Survey Questions)

Participation in Union Activities is assessed by responses to questions on:

1. time spent in union activities.
2. frequency of attending union meetings.
3. interest in following union news and issues.
4. exercising of voting rights in union elections.
5. involvement in membership drives.
6. extent of leadership roles
7. involvement in union-election campaigns.
8. level of contact with the leaders of union.
9. extent of financial contribution to union.

Involvement in party politics is assessed by the following:

1. contribution to the party fund.
2. attendance in party meetings.
3. interest in party news and information.
4. leadership in party organization.
5. voting in political elections.
6. participation in membership drives for the party.
7. campaign work for candidates.
8. contact with leaders of the party.
9. time spent in work for party.

A union's performance as an economic union or its economic orientation is assessed by respondent's attitude to union function:

1. as workers' welfare or the total development of the nation.
2. as redress of labor relations problems or attainment of worker's ownership of industry.
3. as protection of workers' economic interests or the political interests of the party.
4. as securing better working conditions for the laborer or bringing the party to power.

Union members' 'independence' orientation (the sense that local or plant unions can negotiate with the management independent of the external leaders and that the state intervention to regulate industrial relations can be further minimized) can be gauged by the following items:

1. preference for collective bargaining in contrast to state intervention.
2. preference for internal contrasted to external leaders.
3. preference for non political union compared to political union.
4. preference for political leaders compared to non-political leaders.

Attitudes towards the Union: (some questions were taken from The Affluent Worker: Industrial Attitudes by Goldthorpe et al)²²

1. approval of union-party relationship.
2. knowledge of union-party connections.
3. opinion on multiplicity of unions in one plant.
4. attitude towards independent unionism.

The ideological orientation of workers is understood from responses to questions on:

1. self identification of class.
2. preference for political union.
3. preference for political leaders.
4. political organization of labor.
5. preference for a 'labor party'.

Members' disenchantment with external leaders is ascertained from answers to questions on:

1. influence of external leaders among workers.
2. rivalry among leaders.
3. political activism of the leaders.
4. leaders' political clout with management.
5. the strength of leaders in negotiations.
6. failure of external leaders in the recent labor protest.

Sampling Plan

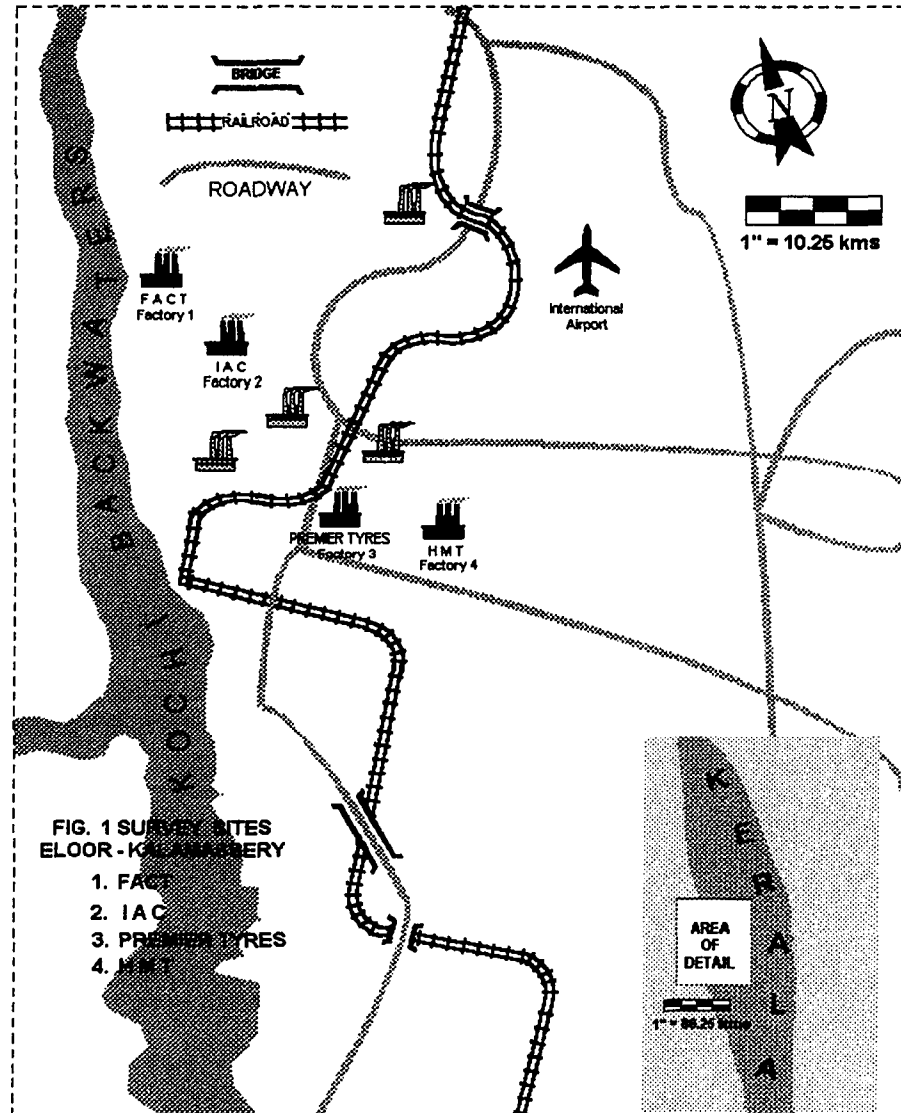
Locus of Study: Eloor-Kalamassery Industrial Belt of Kerala.

Population: Trade union membership of the major industrial trade unions of factories in the belt.

Sampling Design for the Survey

Three Municipal townships constitute the major industrial belt of the state of Kerala. These are Kalamassery, Eloor and Edappally. There are 14 major (employees >500) factories in the study area. The number of employees of these 14 factories are

about 12500. A sample was selected of approximately 1/10 of the unionized employee population of this belt. All the plants of the region are fully unionized.



STAGE I: Distribution of union members by Municipal region

The industrial region surveyed consists of three concentric circles or belts. The

inner belt consisting of factories in the three municipalities mentioned above -- Eloor, Kalamassery, and Edappally is the actual locus of study. The two outer belts (middle belt: Aluva-Kochi; outer belt: Ankamaly-Ambalamugal) of the region are not included for sample selection.

STAGE II: Distribution of union members by plant

All the factories with more than a thousand employees each are included for drawing the sample. There are four such plants in the inner belt (Table 2.1). Together, these four factories account for about half (5730) of the unionized employee population of the inner belt. Thus Hindustan Machine Tools (HMT), Premier Tyres Limited (PTL), Fertilizers & Chemicals Travancore Limited (FACT) and Indian Aluminum Company (IAC) are selected.

TABLE 2.1: Source of sample

Y	FACTOR	UNION	POPULAION
HMT		CITU	625
		INTUC	600
		BMS	75
PTL		CITU	180
		Indep.	800
FACT		Indep.	1500
		INTUC	1200
		BMS	100
IAC		CITU	350
		INTUC	300
Total			5730

STAGE III: Distribution of members by Trade Union Centers

The four major unions of the industrial belt are Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), Center of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), the Independent Unions,

and Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS). At the time of data collection – October 1993 through February 1994 -- BMS was in its initial stages of organizing in this part of the country. In this stage of sample selection, employees of all the four selected factories were stratified on the basis of these four unions and samples were drawn.

According to the decision that around 100 units be selected at the last stage (members of unions in factories) of sampling, the following proportions were sampled. The cells of Table 2.2 contain two numbers: the first is the actual return, and the second is the proposed sample size (questionnaires delivered). Zeros in the cell indicate either the absence of that union in the plant, or non-selection of the union based on sampling considerations.

Table 2.2: Sampling plan: Actual and Expected Returns.

FACTORY	UNION				
	Actual/Expt.	INTUC	CITU	BMS	Independent
FACT	58/100	0/0	55/60	97/150	210/330
HMT	48/100	60/100	29/40	0/0	137/250
IAC	61/100	87/120	0/0	0/0	148/220
PTL	0/0	35/80	0/0	105/150	140/200
Total	167/300	182/300	84/100	202/300	635/1000

Factories selected:

A. Public Sector Undertaking (PSU):

Fertilizers and Chemicals Travancore (FACT)

Hindustan Machine Tools (HMT)

B. Privately Owned Companies (POC):

Indian Aluminium Company (IAC)

Premier Tyres Limited (PTL)

Trade Union Centers:

Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC)

Center of Indian Trade Unions (CITU)

Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS)

Independent Union (Indep.)

Parties that unions are affiliated with:

(INC) Indian National Congress (Union- INTUC)

(CPM) Communist Party Marxist (Union - CITU)

(BJP) Bharatiya Janata Party (BMS)

The original sampling plan and the probability of selection of the units of analysis are shown in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3: Sampling plan with probability of selection

Union	Total industrial Workers in selected factories	Probability of selection	Sample size
INTUC	3500	1/12	300
CITU	3100	1/10	300
Independent	2600	1/8	300
BMS	1000	1/10	100
Total	10200		1000

The sample size works out to be about 1/10 of the industrial workers of the area. It is also assumed that the industrial belt that is surveyed in this study is representative of the industrial workforce of the state of Kerala in general.

The sample design was expected to yield 1000 responses. Actual return was 635, a response rate of 63.5%. Union representatives were cooperative in the survey effort. Data were coded and tabulated. Multivariate analyses were done.

3

UNION, PARTY, AND WORKERS' SOCIAL ORIGINS

The links between one's union selection and their social origins are mediated by the political party they joined. In other words, the chosen party and certain elements of social origins are associated (*Hypothesis 1: Selection by industrial workers of a political party to support is associated with certain social and communal characteristics of those workers.*) and the chosen party and the union of choice are also associated (*Hypothesis 2: Political affiliation of industrial workers typically predates their employment history.*) Data analysis in this chapter primarily centers round these two hypotheses.

CHOICE OF POLITICAL PARTY

1. Rural/urban origins of workers

The State of Kerala has been called one contiguous village, a large rural town or an urban village. Its urbanization has not created sharp divisions between city and village, especially in the central districts from which the vast majority of the study's population come. Yet some level of difference between the people who live close to the district centers and those who come from predominantly rural backgrounds may be expected in the way they perceive their political and social environment.

**TABLE 3.1: Regional background of workers
Rural/Urban Origins and Party**

	ORIGINS			PARTY		
	INC	CPM	BJP	%	N	Total
Rural	50%	32%	18%	100%	407	78%
Urban	41%	45%	14%	100%	113	22%
$\chi^2 = 6.28$ $p < .05$				N=520		100%

In terms of geographic background, a statistically significant but weak association is observed between rural origins and Congress workers, and between urban origins and communist loyalty. Workers from the villages are more likely to be with the Janata party, and urban dwellers are less likely to support the Janata party. Table 3.1 shows the related statistics and $\chi^2 p < 0.05$

Given the contiguous nature of Kerala's small towns and villages, even a small difference in outcome is worth noting. While rural origins are associated with Congress party and BJP affiliations, urban background is associated with loyalty to the Communist party.

2. Religion and current political party affiliation

Religion and caste play a significant role in the lives of the people of India. Its influence on the electoral politics is more than apparent. In Kerala where Hinduism is in a majority, Christians and Moslems are substantial minorities. Historically each of these religious groups have depended on their own parties or

parties which are sympathetic to their causes, to gain and maintain economic and cultural advantage. Industrial workers will not be a complete exception to this.

TABLE 3.2: Religion and politics
Religion and Political Party

RELIGION	PARTY					
	INC	CPM	BJP	%	N	Total
Hindu	35%	38%	27%	100%	319	61%
Non-Hindu	66%	31%	3%	100%	202	39%
$\chi^2 = 68.35$ $p < .001$				N=521		100%

Table 3.2 shows how religion and political affiliation of industrial workers in Kerala are related in different ways. Of the total respondents, 61 percent are Hindus and the rest Christians and Moslems. This division is representative of the population figures for the State. The BJP, which is a religious party of the Hindus, draws only 27% of the Hindu workers. Both the INC and the CPM have larger shares of the Hindu votes than does BJP. Of those who are non-Hindu (Christians and Muslims), the substantial majority belong to the INC. Only 3% of the non-Hindus report being members of the BJP. (χ^2 is significant at $p < 0.0001$.)

Non-Hindu workers are over-represented in the Congress party. Non-Hindu minorities like Muslims and Christians in Kerala historically considered the Indian National Congress as having been protective of their communities' interests. It is remarkable that workers from such minority communities continue to be

substantially represented in the Congress party even though there are sizable parties that are expressly formed -- Kerala Congress by Christians, and Muslim League by Muslims -- to represent those communities in the political arena. A very small number of respondents have indeed identified themselves as belonging to these "communal" political parties. Their (small) size in the sample does not allow any meaningful statistical procedure.

3. Caste and politics

Caste typically applies to Hindus only. (A caste Hindu will become "casteless" or will "escape" caste by changing his religion. Mass conversions of caste Hindus into Islam and Buddhism have occurred, with stated intention of escaping the stigma of lower caste status and caste-based victimization, in many parts of India in the past.) In this study, respondents belonging to Brahmin and Nair castes are grouped as higher caste; Ezhavas as middle caste, and other Hindus as "scheduled". Government usage includes Ezhavas under "other backward castes". The lowest rung is that of scheduled castes who, through a constitutional schedule, are guaranteed reservations in education and employment opportunities. It is a quota system of affirmative action.

High caste and Congress party membership are significantly associated, as Table 3.3 shows. The middle castes are disproportionately present in the Communist party, and they are less likely to be in the Congress. Historically, the Ezhavas (middle caste in this study) have voted the CPM heavily.

TABLE 3.3: Politics of caste/ Caste by Political party

CASTE	PARTY					
	INC	CPM	BJP	%	N	Total
High	40%	28%	32%	100%	171	54%
Middle	28%	49%	23%	100%	89	28%
Scheduled	36%	48%	16%	100%	56	18%
$\chi^2 = 16.24$		p<.005		N = 316		100%

Brahmins and Nairs of Kerala are over-represented in the BJP, while the middle and the lower castes are less likely to support BJP. Again, the perception of BJP as a Hindu "savarna" (high caste) party finds validation in this study. The survey was conducted at a time when BJP was in the initial stage of grass roots organizing in the State of Kerala.

Bharatiya Janata Party is perceived mainly as a high caste Hindu party: its national leadership is brahminic and its cultural ideology sanskritic.²³ Lower castes still look to the communist party for political leadership. Since lower castes are also lower in economic class structure, they are more socialistic in orientation and support the radical ideology of Marxist communism. Nationally the real political rivalry is between BJP and Congress and they vie for the support of the high caste Hindus. This tension is somewhat reflected in the State of Kerala in terms of this study's findings.

Among the Christian minorities, 71 percent are Catholics and the rest belong to different Orthodox and Protestant groups. No significant association was

found between denominational membership and party membership. Christians who form a substantial minority in the State have political parties that draw their followers from that community. In certain industries they also have organized their own trade unions. In the major factories surveyed here the presence of such unions is negligible. A very small percentage of the respondents reported being members of the Kerala Congress, a predominantly Christian party.

4. Religiosity and party selection

Since all the respondents identified themselves as belonging to mainstream religions, they were also asked whether they took their religious faith seriously. 67 percent of them said they considered their religious faith as a significant part of their lives. Table 3.5 identifies the relationship between religious belief and party allegiance. Religious faith and Congress membership are significantly associated, while "non-believers" are disproportionately represented within the Communist party. Non-believing Hindus are least likely to be members of the BJP party. These relationships are at a very high level of significance.

TABLE 3.4: Religiosity (Faith in religious precepts) by Party

	FAITH		PARTY			
	INC	CPM	BJP	%	N	Total
Believer	56%	22%	22%	100%	333	67%
Non-Believer	31%	62%	7%	100%	164	33%
$\chi^2 = 81.54$	p<.001		N = 497			100%

More than sixty percent of those who do not take their religion seriously report membership in the communist party. Kerala model of communism is not long on dogmatic atheism; still religious tenets and communist ideology compete for members' allegiance.

5. Employee's educational attainment and current political party.

In a state that claims full literacy rate, but has the highest rate of unemployment among the educated, all industrial workers can be expected to have some amount of education.

TABLE 3.5 Educational attainment and Party membership

EDUCATION	PARTY				%	N	Total
	INC	CPM	BJP	None			
Mid. Sch	28%	55%	15%	2%	100%	40	7%
High Sch	40%	32%	16%	12%	100%	378	62%
College	43%	31%	11%	15%	100%	189	31%
$\chi^2 = 68.35$		p<.001		N=607		100%	

Table 3.5 reveals a significant statistical association between party membership and educational levels. Workers with a middle school education are more likely to vote for the Communist party. Workers with college degrees tend more to be without any party allegiance. College educated workers are less likely to be BJP members. The statistical association between education and party membership is moderate though significant.

The majority of the respondents are high school graduates; and no distinguishing relationship between that level of education and any party membership is evident.

6. Skill and political party

There is significant but moderate association between skilled work and membership in Indian National Congress Party; between semiskilled work and Bharatiya Janata Party. CPM members are placed in the middle, between Congress and BJP respondents in their association with skilled work. Table 3.6 shows the strength of the association as Pearson χ^2 $p=0.01$.

TABLE 3.6: Level of skill and party membership

	INC	CPM	BJP	%	N	Total
Skilled	50%	36%	14%	100%	362	69%
Semiskilled	41%	35%	24%	100%	161	31%
$\chi^2 = 8.96$		$p = .01$		N = 523		100%

7. Father's job and worker's political choice

Father's occupation is considered a significant component of a person's social origins. In this study, party selection and father's job were found to be modestly correlated with a statistical significance at $p < 0.05$. As evidenced in Table 3.7, children of "white collar" fathers are more likely to have Indian National Congress Party membership, or to belong to no party at all. On the other hand, wage earning father's children are more likely to be in the Communist Parties (CPI and CPM) or in the Bharatiya Janata Party. The latter two parties are ideologically strong, though of opposing characteristics.

Table 3.7: Father's Job and Political Party

FATHER'S OCCUPATION	PARTY				N	Total%	Total
	INC	CPM	BJP	None			
Self employed	55%	35%	7%	3%	285	100%	47%
Wage labor	47%	39%	10%	4%	203	100%	33%
White collar	59%	29%	5%	7%	123	100%	20%
$\chi^2 = 13.45$		p < .05		N = 611		100%	

In a subgroup analysis, it was observed that BJP attracted the children of daily wage earners while the Communist Parties appealed to the children of factory employees. The offspring of self-employed fathers were proportionately distributed among all the parties.

All the major factories of the area were established only half a century ago. A little less than a third of the workers' fathers were themselves factory employees. The generational effect is positive for the ideological parties. However worker's union selection and father's occupation do not have an association of statistical significance. That relationship is qualified by the intervening 'choice of political party', which has strong association of statistical significance with the unions selected (Table 3.8).

Table 3.8: Union by Political Party *

	INC	CPM	BJP	Noparty	Total
INTUC	44%	7%	2%	13%	26%
CITU	14%	58%	6%	4%	29%
BMS	11%	5%	70%	12%	13%
Independent	31%	30%	22%	71%	32%
%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	333	220	46	24	623
Total	54%	35%	7%	4%	100%
$\chi^2 = 322.94$		p < .001			

*This table is “percentaged downward”.

Trade unions of Kerala may be thought of as an amalgam of different class interests. As Table 3.7 clearly shows, members come from families with social histories of agricultural or commercial self-employment (47%), white collar occupations (20%), and blue collar jobs (33%). These interests find expression in different types of parties and related unions.

PARTY AND UNION SELECTION

This section deals with the testing of the two related hypotheses about worker’s choice of party and union. *Hypothesis #2 states that political affiliation of industrial workers typically predates their employment history*, which implies that workers bring their pre-employment political proclivities to their workplace, ahead of their encounter with unions. This will be followed by a discussion of

Hypothesis #3 that seeks to link a worker's choice of union with his party.

Pre-employment political history

The pre-employment history of the workers surveyed has to do with their years in school and college. Since the emergence of political parties in India, elections to student representative bodies in high schools and universities of Kerala have been highly politicized and contested on the lines of party affiliations. All major political parties have their student organizations: the Kerala Students' Union is sponsored by the Indian National Congress; the Student Federation of India is the student wing of the Marxist party. A good number of workers surveyed had an active or passive political involvement before they were employed in their current occupation, mainly through these party-affiliated student unions.

The general pattern of political-union organizing in a plant is as follows. Once a factory is established, all the major national labor unions court those workers sympathetic to their respective political parties in an attempt to help them register a union under their central union banner. Union shop and closed shop practices are illegal and it is considered an unfair labor practice for the union to restrain or coerce workers in the exercise of their right of self-organization. Workers have the freedom to establish rival unions, and they have the right to leave a union and join another. Even in the absence of compulsory – membership requirements the factories of the Alwaye-Eloor industrial belt are virtually completely unionized. Though unions do not control employment decisions, it is not uncommon for powerful union leaders to influence recruitment process so that potential union members may be selected.

Independent unions in local undertakings have no national organization for affiliation.

They are regional in scope, and depend on charismatic leaders for the successful organization of workers to form independent union in a plant. These independent leaders may or may not have strong ties to political parties. When they are truly independent of political parties, they should exhibit a leadership style that inspires confidence on the part of workers from different political parties, and toughness in negotiating with the employer on their own, because they may not enjoy the political patronage of any party or government.

Seventy percent of all workers reported that they were politically affiliated with a party before they were employed. Table 3.9 shows that of those with no pre-employment political history, the majority belongs to the INTUC. The BMS and CITU workers have a higher rate of exposure to politics in their pre-employment years. They represent the two most ideological parties of India: CPM and BMS. Union membership and pre-employment political exposure are statistically associated at a significance level of $p < .001$.

Table 3.9: Affiliation with a political party before employment (by Union)

Political Affiliation	UNION				%	N	Total
	INTUC	CITU	BMS	Indep.			
Pre-job	22%	32%	14%	32%	100%	414	70%
Non-pre-job	38%	21%	9%	32%	100%	177	30%
$\chi^2 = 17.62$ $p < .001$					N = 591		100%

The following section reexamines the *hypothesis #3 which states that the trade union selection of industrial workers is often a function of their party allegiance.*

Generally speaking, political affiliation precedes union affiliation in the case of Kerala workers. As mentioned above, majority of these workers had been exposed to some form of political participation before they got employed. In the fully unionized organized sectors of Kerala's industrial job market all employees join unions at the point of employment. 79% of all workers reported that *they joined a political party ("party first") before they joined a union*. (This is comparable to the 69.5% who reported that *they joined a party before they got a job ("pre-job")*, as reported in Table 3.9 above.) "Party first" was the rule for all employees and across all unions. But to the extent that "union first" (joining party after joining a union) is occurring, it seems to occur more for Indian National Trade Union Congress, the congress party's union, than other unions (χ^2 significant at $p=.005$). It is not clear whether INTUC has a successful program of promoting the (INC) party among their workers or less ideologically inclined union and party that INC and INTUC are, attract those workers who are less ideological and not so enthusiastic about party politics. Part of this problem will be addressed later in the section titled '*union's role in political (party) mobilizing*'.

Does prior party affiliation (pre-affiliation) have any effect on their current relationship with the political party? Workers were classified according to whether they described their relation to the party as "member" "supporter" or "outsider", in descending order of degree of participation.

Table 3.10: Prior Party Affiliation by Current Party Relationship

AFFILIATION	RELATION TO PARTY					
	Member	Supporter	Outsider	%	N	Total
Party first	48%	46%	6%	100%	435	79%
Union first	25%	59%	16%	100%	116	21%
$\chi^2 = 28.07$	p<.001				N = 551	100%

Table 3.10 analyzes the data for this purpose. Of those who said they joined a party before joining a union, similar proportions tend to become members or supporters; only 6% describe themselves today as outsiders (with no connection with any party). Greater diversity is observed among those who joined a union before they opted for a party. The majority of "union-first" employees tend to be only supporters of their respective parties.

Tables 3.11, 3.12 and 3.13 address the question of how political and independent unions differ on the effect of prior party affiliation ("party first") on the level of current political participation. "Outsiders" are not included in these tables because of the extremely small cell percentages obtained for that category. Of those reporting "party first", similar proportions tended to become members and supporters. Wider variation occurs among those who reported "union-first". 70% of them became "supporters" of their party as opposed to only 30% who actually became "members" (Table 3.11). So prior political involvement does tend to result in more active involvement in parties in the long run. In separate analyses

(controlling for union: Tables 3.12, & 3.13), the same pattern was found to be valid for political and independent unions.

Table 3.11: Prior Party Affiliation by Current Party Relationship*

AFFILIATION	RELATION TO PARTY				
	Member	Supporter	%	N	Total
Party first	51%	49%	100%	412	81%
Union first	30%	70%	100%	97	19%
$\chi^2 = 13.68$ $p < .001$ N = 509 100%					

* The category "outsider" is dropped in this and the next two tables.

Table 3.12: Prior Party Affiliation by Current Party Relationship

Controlling for UNION = Political union

AFFILIATION	RELATION TO PARTY				
	Member	Supporter	%	N	Total
Party first	49%	51%	100%	301	81%
Union first	31%	69%	100%	71	19%
$\chi^2 = 7.97$ $p < .005$ N = 372 100%					

Multivariate analysis of data presented in Tables 3.12 and 3.13 show the effect of political vs. independent union on current party membership, controlling for “party first”. Independent union members are slightly more likely to be members if party came first, no difference if union came first.

Table 3.13: Prior Party Affiliation by Current Party Relationship

Controlling for UNION = Independent union

AFFILIATION	RELATION TO PARTY				
	Member	Supporter	%	N	Total
Party first	56%	44%	100%	110	80%
Union first	30%	70%	100%	27	20%
$\chi^2 = 6.20$	$p = .01$			N = 137	100%

Table 3.14 shows how members of the major and minor parties are distributed between the political and independent unions. Workers of major parties (INC, CPM, BJP) are slightly more likely to belong to political unions, compared to those in minor parties (Kerala Congress and Muslim League); those with no party affiliation are almost evenly divided between the political and independent unions.

It is important to note that with the emerging coalition politics at the local and the national level, more and more small/minor parties are becoming increasingly powerful in electoral politics. This trend may contribute to the further fragmentation of the union movement in India.

Table 3.14: Size of Party (major & minor parties) by Union Type

Party Size	UNION				
	Political	Indep.	%	N	Total
Major Parties	71%	29%	100%	523	82%
Minor Parties	67%	33%	100%	36	6%
No Party	49%	51%	100%	76	12%
$\chi^2 = 15.76$		$p < .001$	N = 635	100%	

Perceptions about union-party fit.

Based on the nature of their affiliation with party, employees were categorized as pre-affiliates if they belonged to the party before they joined the respective union; post-affiliates if they joined the party after they joined the respective union; mis-affiliates if the union and party did not "match", and non-affiliates if the workers did not sympathize with any party. Pre-affiliation is the rule as already noted above, and as shown in Tables 3.15 – 3.18 below

Table 3.15: Employees' Union

Value Label	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cum Percent
INTUC	168	26.5	26.5
CITU	182	28.7	55.1
BMS	84	13.2	68.3
Indep	201	31.7	100.0
Total	635	100.0	

Table 3.16: Nature of Party Affiliation

Value Label	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cum Percent
Pre-affiliate	435	68.5	68.5
Post-affiliate	98	15.4	83.9
Mis-affiliate	67	10.6	94.5
Non-affiliate	35	5.5	100.0
Total	635	100.0	

Table 3.17: Commitment to party and/or union

Value Label	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cum Percent
Committed to union only	142	22.4	22.8
Committed to none	66	10.4	33.4
Committed to both	363	57.2	91.8
Committed to party only	51	8.0	100.0
Missing	13	2.0	
Total	635	100.0	

Table 3.18: Nature of Party Affiliation by Employee's Union

AFFILIATION	UNION						Total
	INTUC	CITU	BMS	Indep.	%	N	
Pre-affiliate	30%	30%	10%	30%	100%	435	69%
Post-affiliate	21%	31%	20%	28%	100%	98	15%
Mis-affiliate	15%	27%	21%	37%	100%	67	11%
Non-affiliate	15%	11%	11%	63%	100%	35	5%
$\chi^2 = 34.80$		p < .001		N = 635		100%	

It is interesting to note that the members of the independent unions believe that their parties support their membership in the independent union. Many communist party members and some congress party members who are independent union employees perceive no discrepancy between their parties and their independent union. This is contradicted by the fact that the same company has party sponsored unions alongside the independent union and there is observable rivalry between them. For example Fertilizers and Chemicals Ltd. has an independent union and an Indian National Congress-sponsored union. Nonetheless the members of the Independent union think that their political parties support their membership in the non-party, independent union.

Union's role in political (party) mobilizing

Tables 3.19, 20, 21, and 22 show separately for each union, the relationship between 'pre-affiliation with political party' and their 'current status with the party'. The four tables were combined to construct Table 4.23. An attempt is made to place the four unions on a continuum of their "mobilizing - demobilizing" power: the union's role in recruiting and maintaining party membership.

A union that has been successful in recruiting its non-pre-affiliate union members into the sponsoring political party is considered a 'high mobilizer'. Where pre-affiliates continue to remain members of a political party, unions are deemed to have succeeded in "maintaining" the desired status; if pre-affiliate members of a union left their original party while remaining members of the affiliated union, we have a case of a union that is a 'demobilizer'. Some non-pre-affiliate union

members continue to remain outside the party despite their corresponding union membership; here unions ‘fail to mobilize’. The pre-affiliates who remain only supporters and the non-pre-affiliates who are mobilized to be only supporters are examples of “low maintenance” and/or “low mobilizing”.

Of all the INTUC workers who reported having joined the party before joining a union, 49% each remain members and supporters. As the comparative data in Tables 3.19 and 3.23 show, INTUC has the top position in mobilizing.

Table 3.19: Pre-affiliation with party by current relationship with party

Controlling for UNION = INTUC

AFFILIATION		RELATION TO PARTY				
	Member	Supporter	Outsider	Total %	N	Total
Party first	49%	49%	2%	100%	121	72%
Union first	32%	45%	23%	100%	47	28%
$\chi^2 = 20.09$		p < .001		N = 168		100%

In analyzing the CITU membership in relation to their pre-affiliation with their political party, it is found that, of those who joined CITU union before they had any political inclination, 60% remained merely supporters of their political party (Table 3.20). Union membership did not influence them to become members of the sponsoring party. The CITU and the BMS unions produce identical proportions of supporters (60%) from the workers who joined “union first”. (Tables 3.20 and 3.21) What is the effect of CITU vs. BMS unions – the two ideological unions -- on party membership, controlling for “party first”? The BMS union workers are fairly more likely (61%) to be members if they had a “party first” experience. The same is true for those

BMS workers with a “union first” history, but only at a minimal likelihood level.

Table 3.20: Pre-affiliation with party by current relationship with party

Controlling for UNION = CITU

	RELATION TO PARTY					
	Member	Supporter	Outsider	Total %	N	Total
Party first	40%	56%	4%	100%	138	76%
Union first	20%	60%	20%	100%	44	24%
$\chi^2 = 15.90$		p < .001		N = 182		100%

CITU is a low maintenance and moderate/low mobilizing union. This is evident from the data in Table 3.20 above and from the reconstructed Table 3.23 below. Its maintenance ratio is 56% and mobilizing ratio is 60%. This is somewhat surprising because of the rigid structure of the party and the local councils well positioned to educate and recruit new members. It is to be mentioned that in recent years the tension between CITU (union) leadership and CPM (party) leadership has started spilling into the open.²⁴

Table 3.21: Pre-affiliation with party by current relationship with party

Controlling for UNION = BMS

AFFILIATION	RELATION TO PARTY					
	Member	Supporter	Outsider	%	N	Total
Party first	61%	30%	9%	100%	54	64%
Union first	27%	60%	13%	100%	30	36%
$\chi^2 = 9.38$		p<.01		N = 84		100%

BMS is the clear winner in its effort to maintain its rank and file within the BJP party. It is a high maintainer (61%) and a moderate or low mobilizer. (See Tables 3.21 and 3.23.) There is a new revival among this party and union across the nation. Especially in Kerala, BJP and BMS are not considered numerically strong. Data also shows that BMS has the highest percentage (9%) of demobilized members too!

Table 3.22: Pre-affiliation with party by current relationship with party

Controlling for UNION = Independent union

PRE-AFFILIATION	RELATION TO PARTY					
	Member	Supporter	Outsider	%	N	Total
Party first	52%	40%	8%	100%	121	60%
Union first	16%	47%	37%	100%	80	40%
$\chi^2 = 37.00$		p<.01		N = 201		100%

Table 3.22 describes the effect of pre-affiliation on membership in party. An independent union by its nature is not engaged in any formal mobilizing campaign for any party. This is evidenced by its non-affiliate/non-mobilizing ratio (37%) in the Tables 3.22 and 3.23. Its high maintenance share (52%) is not meager either, meaning that members of political parties do not quit those parties just because they join an independent union.

Table 3.23 below presents the reconstruction of Tables 3.19, 3.20, 3.21, and 3.22.

All numbers in the cells are percentages. The INTUC is a high mobilizer (32%); BMS has demobilized more than others (9%), though it is a high maintainer also; Independent unions fail to mobilize (37%); and CITU is a moderate maintainer and mobilizer (57%).

Table 3.23: The Continuum of Mobilizing – Demobilizing Function of Union

High maintenance (%)				Low maintenance (%)				Demobilizing (%)			
49%	40%	61%	52%	49%	57%	30%	40%	3%	4%	9%	8%
INTUC	CITU	BMS	Indep	INTUC	CITU	BMS	Indep	INTUC	CITU	BMS	Indep
32%	21%	27%	16%	45%	59%	60%	47%	23%	21%	13%	37%
High mobilizing (%)				Low mobilizing (%)				Non-mobilizing (%)			
MEMBER				SUPPORTER				OUTSIDER			

In the following chapter, an examination of the ideological and instrumental orientations of the unions will be attempted. Political unions will be compared among themselves to see the differences in their political orientations, and all of the together will be contrasted with independent unions to understand the extent of economic inclinations of each.

4

IDEOLOGY AND PRAGMATISM OF UNIONS

Workers are greatly aware of the political and ideological differences between the various unions and their sponsoring political parties. In the introductory chapter some of the major points of such differences were indicated. In the context of India, they revolve around (1) the role of unions in nation-building, (2) attitude to collective bargaining (3) preference for external or internal leadership of unions (4) basis of union organizing, and (5) preference for politicians as union leaders. Based on the analysis of responses to the questions addressing the five issues mentioned above, the members of different unions do have an understanding and appreciation of the distinguishing ideological traits of their unions.

In this chapter, data analysis is guided by a hypothesis (#4) which states that *political labor unions of India reflect the ideologies of the parties that sponsor them*. Not all unions admit the fact of their essential connection with the political party. BMS for example denies that it is the labor wing of the BJP party, although most objective observers would argue that there is a de facto link.

Table 4.1 shows that workers who belong to different political unions and the independent union have varying degrees of commitment to nation-building vs. advancement of workers' interests. 71% of BMS workers and 68% of the CITU believe that national development is the primary duty of unions.

Table 4.1 Union's primary interest: National development vs. Workers' advancement.

Nation vs. Worker	UNION				
	Indep.	INTUC	BMS	CITU	Total
National interests	53%	55%	71%	68%	60%
Workers' interests	47%	45%	29%	32%	40%
% (N)	100% (193)	100% (162)	100% (84)	100% (177)	100% (616)
Total	31%	26%	14%	29%	100%
$\chi^2 = 14.91$		p = .001			

Though their sponsoring political parties stand on opposite ends of the political spectrum, the workers agree on the primacy of national development. As Malkani, a proponent of Jana Sangh ideology (currently BJP, the party close to BMS ideology), points out, "the Jana Sangh, the Hindu Mahasabha, and the RSS do not divide the country on the basis of race, religion or culture. They seek to unite it on the one granite foundation of national life, i.e., Bharatiya Sanskriti (Indian/Hindu culture). The only other possible foundation is the hunger of men (poverty), i.e., Communism. The real battle in India thus is between Hinduism and Communism. Congress (party) is only an ad hoc phenomenon – a left-over of the British connection.²⁵ Probably, BMS refers to national development as 'Hindu nationalism' and CITU implies 'state control'. Independent and Congress unions have similar distributions of preference for national and labor interests. (p=.001)

Table 4.2: Worker's Preference for State Intervention vs. Collective Bargaining in Industrial Relations.

Source of control	UNION			
	Indep.	INTUC	BMS	CITU
State Control	19%	11%	16%	9%
Coll. Bargaining	81%	89%	84%	91%
% (N)	100% (197)	100% (166)	100% (82)	100% (180)
Total	31%	27%	13%	29%
$\chi^2 = 8.06$	$p < .05$	$N = 625$		100%

On the question of collective bargaining, all unions prefer collective bargaining to state intervention. However, CITU's higher (though very moderate) rate of preference for collective bargaining is worth noting. Though they opt for state control of industry and industrial relations, they show more faith in collective bargaining. A reason may be that their sponsoring party has never been in power in the central government; and in Kerala they have only intermittently been in control. (Table 4.2; $p < .05$)

The external leaders of Indian trade unions are, generally, elected representatives to the State Assemblies or the National Parliament. The inside (plant) leaders are not always politically active.

Table 4.3 Workers' preference for External vs. Internal Leaders by Union.

Type of leadership	UNION				
	Indep.	INTUC	BMS	CITU	Total
External Leaders	17%	17%	12%	41%	22.9%
Internal Leaders	83%	83%	88%	59%	77.1%
% (N)	100% (193)	100% (166)	100% (83)	100% (170)	100% (612)
Total	31%	27%	14%	28%	100%
$\chi^2 = 42.83$ $p < .001$ $N = 612$					

When workers prefer internal leadership to external leadership, they are indeed opting for non-political leadership of their unions. All unions show preference for internal leadership, but the CITU workers' preference for external leadership is at a substantially higher rate compared to all other workers. This reflects the tight organizational connection between the Communist party and the leftist union. (Table 4.3).

Table 4.4 below analyzes the preferred basis for organizing unions: as political unions or as independent unions. Greater preference is shown for non-political organizing. But CITU preference for political organizing is at a higher rate compared to other unions. ($p < .0001$)

Table 4.4 Workers' preference for Political vs. Non-political Union Type by Union

Type of Union	UNION				
	Indep.	INTUC	BMS	CITU	Total
Political Union Type	22.2%	36.9%	39.8%	47.7%	35.6%
Nonpolitical Union Type	77.8%	63.1%	60.2%	52.3%	64.4%
% (N)	100% (198)	100% (168)	100% (83)	100% (174)	100% (623)
Total	32%	27%	13%	28%	100%
$\chi^2 = 27.31$ $p < .001$ $N = 623$					

When it comes to preference for leadership source, unions vary more widely. Independent union workers and INTUC members show similar rates of selection toward non-politicians. BMS shows the strongest preference for the same leadership type. CITU, on the other hand, prefers political leaders to guide them. (Table 4.5; $p < .0001$)

Table 4.5 Union's Preference of Political vs. Non-political Leaders

Leadership type	UNION				
	Indep.	INTUC	BMS	CITU	Total
Politician	31%	32%	18%	56%	37%
Non-politician	69%	68%	82%	44%	63%
% (N)	100% (191)	100% (165)	100% (81)	100% (175)	100% (612)
Total	31%	27%	13%	29%	100%
$\chi^2 = 43.25$ $p < .0001$ $N = 612$					

Table 4.6: Union's Preference for Nationalism vs. Pragmatism by Union type;

Ideology	UNION TYPE		
	Political	Independent	Total
Nationalism	64%	53%	60%
Pragmatism	36%	47%	40%
% (N)	100% (423)	100% (193)	100% (616)
Total	69%	31%	100%
$\chi^2 = 6.39$ $p = .01$			N = 616

Table 4.7: Preference of Unions for State Control vs. Collective Bargaining

Control center	UNION TYPE		
	Political	Independent	Total
State control	11%	19%	14%
Coll. Bargaining	89%	81%	86%
% (N)	100% (428)	100% (197)	100% (625)
Total	69%	31%	100%
$\chi^2 = 6.11;$		$p = .01$	

Table 4.8: Union's Preference for External Leaders vs. Internal Leaders;

Leadership type	UNION TYPE		
	Political	Independent	Total
External	26%	17%	23%
Internal	74%	83%	77%
% (N)	100% (419)	100% (193)	100% (612)
Total %	69%	31%	100%
$\chi^2 = 6.33$	p=.01	N = 612	

When political unions taken together were compared with the independent unions on the basis of factors discussed above, the following findings emerged. A greater proportion (64%) of the members of political unions consider "nation-building" the primary function of union, while 53% of the independent union workers share that belief (Table 4.6). It is surprising to note that the independent unionists' preference for collective bargaining (81%) is not as strong as that of the political union members (89%). The expectation was that the independent unions represent an advanced stage in union movement in India, and that the collective bargaining process is the more advanced and rational method to achieve the pragmatic goals set by modern unions (Table 4.7).

Table 4.9: Union's preference for Political vs. non-political Union-organizing

Basis for Union organizing	UNION TYPE		
	Political	Independent	Total
Political basis	42%	22%	36%
Nonpolitical basis	58%	78%	64%
% (N)	100% (425)	100% (198)	100% (623)
Total	68%	32%	100%
$\chi^2 = 22.76$			$p < .0001$
			N = 623

Independent union workers consistently preferred internal leaders to external leaders (Table 4.8); and more independent workers (78%) than political unionists (58%) selected non-political basis for organizing unions (Table 4.9).

ECONOMIC ORIENTATION OF UNIONS

Third World labor movements in general, and the Indian trade union movement in particular, are bound up with the historic national struggle for independence from the colonial powers. Historians of unionism categorize unions in the developing countries as political unions: some are sponsored by the state itself; in some countries the dominant political party organizes unions. In those countries with a genuine multi-party system, political parties engage in competitive union-organizing along their ideological lines. As India has passed from "one

dominant party” system to a competing multi-party system, the union landscape has become littered with conflicting ideological claims and justifications.

In order to assess the variability in their economic orientation – the perception that the union’s primary aim is to better the economic destiny of the worker – an index labeled *economic orientation* was constructed. The index is the cumulative score computed from responses to several questions dealing with worker’s awareness about the stated aim of their union, its emphasis on national development versus workers’ direct interests, its preference for political or non-political strategy for union-organizing, preferred type of leadership (external versus internal, and political versus non-political), preferred agency for industrial relations system (state intervention or collective bargaining). Hypotheses #5 and #6 about the economic behavior of Indian unions will be examined below. What is the level of economic orientation shared by each union? Does a non-political, independent union exhibit greater economic concern than the ideologically entrenched political unions?

Index Construction : economic orientation

The guidelines used to construct composite indexes in this study are based on the principles of face validity, unidimensionality, and variance. At the time of questionnaire construction *items that appeared on its face to indicate respondents’ inclination towards political/ideological vs. economic/pragmatic aims of unions* were included. The items consisted of ten sets of two statements each (see Appendix for Survey Questionnaire, Q64 through Q73): agreement with

one implied low economic orientation; agreement with the other statement implied high economic orientation.

At the analysis stage, two items (Q69 and Q73) were dropped from the list of possible components of the index, because they were found to involve multidimensional constructs. Statements of Q69 assumed that all external leaders were political leaders and that all internal leaders were non-politicians. The item did not meet the standard of unidimensionality; it contained two dimensions or layers of constructs, i.e., external/internal and political/economic. Statements of Q73 were also eliminated on the basis of the same principle. They referred to at least three dimensions of unionism: trade based vs. industry based union, one party union vs. one party for all workers, one union in one trade vs. one union in one industry etc.. This resulted in a reduced list of eight items for constructing the index of economic orientation.

An intercorrelations analysis was done on the remaining items. Two items (Q64 and Q67) were eliminated from the final list due to their very low intercorrelations with other items. The resulting matrix of correlations among the remaining six items is presented in the Appendix II, as Table C)

A simple test of variance was carried out by crosstabulating the selected items with union membership. The selected items were found to divide the respondents into two groups of varying sizes based on their response to the questions²⁶. The items divided the sample into groups of 50/50 or 60/40, or 80/20 or 90/10 proportions confirming the existence of variance among selected items.

Finally a statistic that summarizes the reliability of an index was computed. The Cronbach's alpha is a measure of the internal consistency of a set of items,

and it ranges from zero (no internal consistency) to one (perfect internal consistency).²⁷ The formula for alpha is, $\alpha = KR/1+(K-1)R$.

Where:

K = The number of indicators in the index.

R = The average intercorrelation among the K items comprising the index.

$\alpha = 6(0.1949)/1+(6-1)0.1949 = 0.6$. An ideal measure would be 0.7 or above. However, the obtained score (alpha) indicates a fair level of confidence in the constructed index of economic orientation.

The first of the paired statements reflects high political or low economic orientation and was assigned a value of zero, if the respondent showed agreement with it. A value of one was assigned to the second statement (showing high economic orientation) in the pair if respondent agreed with it. Added together, the six item index would have a score in the range of zero to six (0-6): very low economic orientation if zero, and very high economic orientation if six. Three gradations of economic orientation were determined as low (0 – 2), high (3 – 4), and very high (5 – 6). Scores were assigned by the method of equal weighting because each item was thought to be measuring slightly different aspects of the index.

Members of unions sponsored by parties with deeper ideological roots tend to exhibit a weaker economic orientation. Table 4.10 shows that 40% of CITU workers have a very high economic preference, while 57% of the non-ideological, independent union workers show very high economic orientation. The INTUC workers, mainly connected to the so-called “non-ideological” congress party, are

more likely than the CITU and BMS workers to show greater economic orientation. This is in support of the proposed hypothesis: the weaker the political ideology of the union, the stronger its economic orientation.

Table 4.10: Economic Orientation of Labor Unions

Economic Orientation	UNION				
	CITU	BMS	INTUC	Indep.	Total
Low	19%	7%	11%	24%	13%
High	41%	45%	33%	31%	36%
Very High	40%	48%	56%	57%	51%
%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
(N)	(174)	(82)	(166)	(192)	(614)
Total	28%	14%	27%	31%	100%
$\chi^2 = 18.16$		p = .005			

Since the source of a union's ideological strength is its sponsoring political party, the following crosstabulation (Table 4:11) of economic orientation with party affiliation shows, even more strongly, the relationship between ideology and economic orientation. Of those without any party allegiance, 80% show very high economic orientation. Communist party workers are at the other end of the spectrum with 35% showing very high economic orientation.

Table 4.11: Economic Orientation by Current Political Party Affiliation

Economic Orientation	PARTY				
	CPM	BJP	INC	No Party	Total
Low	23%	7%	11%	3%	13%
High	44%	41%	35%	17%	37%
Very High	33%	52%	54%	80%	50%
%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
(N)	(192)	(89)	(242)	(71)	(594)
Total	32%	15%	41%	12%	100%
$\chi^2 = 58.97$		p < .0001			

No statistical association was found between industrial sector (public vs. private) and economic orientation. Table 4.12 explains the relationship between economic orientation and workers' original party membership. The magnitude of variation is highly similar to those obtained in Table 4:11 above. 82% of those who are party-less assigned a very high economic role to their union.

Table 4.12: Economic Orientation by Original Party Affiliation

Economic Orientation	ORIGINAL PARTY				
	CPM	BJP	INC	No Party	Total
Low	20%	11%	10%	5%	13%
High	46%	30%	33%	14%	37%
Very High	34%	59%	57%	82%	50%
%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
(N)	(213)	(46)	(314)	(22)	(595)
Total	36%	8%	53%	3%	100%
$\chi^2 = 40.75$		p < .00001			

Data analysis leads to the rejection of the nulls for both the hypotheses. On a scale of “very high -- high – low” economic orientation, Independent workers are more likely than others to score ‘very high’. On the same scale, the CITU members are the least likely to score ‘very high’. The more extreme the political ideology, the weaker the economic orientation.

UNION AND PARTY: PATTERNS OF PARTICIPATION

To answer the question whether there are different patterns of party and union participation across unions and between political and independent unions, an index of participation was developed. The level and extent of participation by workers in political party and union activities was measured on the basis of eight

indicators. These items have been repeatedly used in various research endeavors to compute participation, and are considered to have good face validity. Table A and B in Appendix II presents the intercorrelations of the items. All the items show substantial intercorrelations, and are retained in the indexes of party participation, and union participation.

1. time spent in party/union activities
2. financial contribution to party/union
3. attendance in party/union meetings
4. number of leadership positions held in party/union
5. frequency of communication with party/union leaders
6. involvement in party/union organizing
7. involvement in party/union election campaign
8. access to news and literature on party/union

The data was analyzed to test the *hypothesis that members of the independent unions participate more in their unions than in their political parties.*

Tables 4.13 and 4.14 compare the *means* of union and party participation of workers belonging to political and independent unions.

Table 4.13: Union participation and Union type

Summaries of UNION PARTICIPATION By levels of UNION

Value Label	Mean	Std Dev	Sum of Sq	Cases
Political union	23.79	6.12	15588.85	417
Independent union	21.17	6.19	6662.19	175
Within Groups Total	23.02	6.14	22251.04	592
Criterion Variable UPART				

Analysis of Variance (continuation of Table 4.13)

Source	Sum of Squares	D.F.	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	849.82	1	849.82	22.53	.0000
Within Groups	22251.04	590	37.71		

$$\text{Eta} = .1918 \quad \text{Eta Squared} = .0368$$

Table 4.14: Party Participation and Union type

Summaries of PARTY PARTICIPATION By levels of UNION

Value Label	Mean	Std Dev	Sum of Sq	Cases
Political union	20.04	6.81	19642.15	425
Independent union	18.15	7.07	9603.94	193
Within Groups Total	19.45	6.89	29246.09	618
Criterion Variable PPART				

Analysis of Variance

Source	Sum of Squares	D.F.	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	478.96	1	478.96	10.09	.0016
Within Groups	29246.09	616	47.48		

$$\text{Eta} = .1269 \quad \text{Eta Squared} = .0161$$

As already indicated, a higher proportion of political union members register greater participation in both union and party activities, compared to independent union workers. However the union participation rate of independent unionists is higher than their own rate of participation in the party activities. The mean of union participation index of independent workers is 21.17 compared to the mean of their party involvement index, which is 18.15.

The related hypothesis (Hypothesis #8) *that independent union workers*

participate in political activities at a lesser rate than the political union workers was subjected to the same statistical test. Data was analyzed to see how members of independent and political unions differ on the level of participation in party and union activities. Table 4.15 shows that independent unionists participate in political activities at a lesser rate than the political union workers do. Only 12% of the independent workers show high level of political participation as opposed to 15% of political unionists. The differences are statistically significant but not large ($p < .05$). It was also found that among younger workers, this gap is even wider.

Table 4.15: Unions and Political Party Participation

Political Participation	UNION		
	Political	Independent	Total
Low	53%	65%	57%
Medium	32%	23%	29%
High	15%	12%	14%
% (N)	100% (423)	100% (192)	100% (615)
Total	69%	31%	100%
$\chi^2 = 7.65$ $p < .05$			

As shown in Table 4.16, 6% of young independents show a high rate of political party involvement as compared to 19% for their political union counterparts. ($p < .01$). Younger members are less interested in political participation than their older union colleagues. The connection between the political aims and union demands may be slowly unwinding for the younger

generations. These new members are content to be in the union organization and expect their economic interests to be protected by the organizational leadership, which is not necessarily of political origin.

Table 4.16: Party Participation by Labor Union

Controlling for AGE = Young

Party Participation		UNION	
	Political	Independent	Total
Low	54%	69%	59%
Medium	27%	25%	26%
High	19%	6%	15%
% (N)	100% (175)	100% (94)	100% (269)
Total	65%	35%	100%
$\chi^2 = 9.60$		p<.005	

Table 4.17: Party Participation by Labor Union

Controlling for AGE = Old

Party Participation		UNION	
	Political	Independent	Total
Low	53%	61%	55%
Medium	35%	23%	32%
High	12%	16%	13%
% (N)	100% (244)	100% (95)	100% (339)
Total	72%	28%	100%
$\chi^2 = 4.77$		p<.1	

The administrative structure of labor unions in India has been rather rudimentary. There are no full time office holders in the plant unions. They have few services to offer for the members during a strike or lockout. Some changes in the way member services are offered can be seen in some plant unions. With the emergence of stronger internal leaders, average members may tend to leave many organizational issues to their leaders, and participate less in the union activities. As the unions evolve into structurally sound (i.e., routinized) institutions, members may become less involved in the day to day activities of the union.

Hypothesis #9, which states that the rate of union participation is higher among the Independent union members than among the political union members, was tested.

Union participation of workers was coded using items similar to the party involvement indices. The opposite of the original hypothesis is proven. Table 4.18 indicates that union participation is at a higher rate among the political unionists compared to the members of Independent union. 26% of political unionists and 16% of independents show high levels of union involvement.

Table 4:18 Union Participation by Union Type

Union Participation	UNION		
	Political	Independent	Total
Low	28%	47%	33%
Medium	46%	37%	43%
High	26%	16%	24%
%	100%	100%	100%
(N)	(417)	(175)	(592)
Total	70%	30%	100%
$\chi^2 = 21.83$		P < .0001	

The overall analysis of data on political and union participation by workers does not suggest a tendency towards 'selective involvement' as expected. The expectation was that members of the political unions would be more involved with their parties, and that the independents would participate more in their unions. In fact, the Communist party's union workers show *greater* level of participation both in their party *and* union. Independent unionists are *less* involved in their union *and* party. It seems that participation is driven by ideological commitment.

GROWING DISENCHANTMENT WITH LEADERS

In light of journalistic information and anecdotal data²⁸, it was hypothesized (*Hypothesis# 10*) that *there is a high degree of disenchantment among the union members with regard to the external political union leaders.* With the economic openness in recent years, the Central Government demanded

higher productivity and profitability from its public sector undertakings. The generosity shown to public sector undertakings (PSU's) labor in the past by the Government was less in evidence.

In some major labor strikes in the state during the time of data collection, 1994, unions and their leaders were the clear losers. There appeared to be a growing disenchantment of workers with their leadership. In a previous survey of trade union leaders²⁹ it was found that the leaders were somewhat dissatisfied with their followers. One leader considered industrial workers as becoming merely wage conscious and "ungrateful" to their leaders. In an attempt to gauge the workers' sentiments towards their leaders, an index of disenchantment was constructed, based on the respondent's perception of the leader's

1. influence on workers
2. influence on the management
3. effect on union multiplicity in a factory
4. ability to protect worker's interests
5. role in collective bargaining
6. effect on union rivalry
7. success in securing worker's interests
8. role in recent labor actions

It was hypothesized that there is a high level of disenchantment among workers regarding the existing leadership patterns involving external and political persons. I also expected to see variations in the degree of dissatisfaction experienced by workers belonging to different unions.

Before the index construction, however, the individual items were analyzed separately to see how workers felt about their leaders' ability, influence and success. Independent analysis of these factors shows that there is a high degree of disenchantment among the union members with regard to their external political leaders. *Agreement with the statement showed disenchantment, and disagreement indicated the opposite.*

1. Influence of political-external leaders among workers has waned (Q74).

BMS workers are more likely to agree with the statement than workers of other unions. However the great majority of all union employees agree that the influence of external political leaders on the workers has dwindled over the years (Table 4.19).

Table 4.19: Workers' perception of leader's influence among workers by Union

Q74**	UNION				
	INTUC	CITU	BMS	Indep.	Total
Leader's Influence...					
Has waned	78.3%	74.6%	89.2%	83.8%	80.4%
Has not waned	21.7%	25.4%	10.8%	16.2%	19.6%
$\chi^2 = 9.87$ $p = .01$ $N = 628$					100%

**Do you agree or disagree? *Influence of political-external leaders among workers has waned (Q74).*

2. Union multiplicity results from leaders' rivalries (Q75).

Every party in Kerala has a corresponding labor union. It takes only seven workers to join together to form a plant union. Political factionalism, personal animosities, conflict with existing leadership, communal preferences can all lead to

multiplicity of unions in workplace. Notably fewer CITU workers than others put the blame for this condition on the leaders (Table 4.20).

Table 4.20: Worker's perception of leaders' rivalries by Union

Q75@ Leaders' rivalries...	UNION				
	INTUC	CITU	BMS	Indep.	Total
Cause union multiplicity	80.2%	67.2%	79.5%	80.3%	76.4%
Do not cause multiplicity	19.8%	32.8%	20.5%	19.7%	23.6%
$\chi^2 = 11.91$	$p = .01$	N = 628			100%

@Do you agree or disagree? *Union multiplicity results from leaders' rivalries.*

3. Politically active leaders generally fail to protect workers' interests (Q76).

Respondents generally agree that political leaders have their eyes on the political prize, which may not always be worker's interests. Here again CITU workers are more sympathetic to their external leaders than are the rest of the union workers (Table 4.21).

Table 4.21: Workers' feelings about leaders' political ambition by Union

Q76# Political Leaders...	UNION				
	INTUC	CITU	BMS	Indep.	Total
Fail to protect Workers' interests	83.7%	66.1%	89.2%	83.2%	79.2%
Do not fail to protect interests	16.3%	33.9%	10.8%	16.8%	20.8%
$\chi^2 = 27.78$	$p = .001$	N = 626			100%

#Agree / disagree? *Politically active leaders fail to protect workers' interests.*

4. Influence of external-political leaders over management has waned. (Q77)

Greater variation is seen in their response to the question of leader's influence on the management. More BMS workers (80%) believe that external leaders have lost their impact on the management (Table 4.22). INTUC and CITU, and Independent union workers share the same sentiments of dissatisfaction, but at a lower level of intensity, towards their leaders.

Table 4.22: Workers' perception of leaders' influence on the management by union

Q77++ Leaders' influence On management...	UNION				
	INTUC	CITU	BMS	Indep.	Total
Has waned	60%	60%	80%	67%	65%
Has not waned	40%	40%	20%	33%	35%
$\chi^2 = 11.45$	$p < .01$	N = 626			100%

++Do you agree or disagree? *Influence of external-political leaders over the management has waned.* (Q77)

5. External leaders create barriers against unions' cooperation (Q79).

The majority (55%) of the CITU workers do not think that the leaders are responsible for the lack of cooperation among the unions in the plant. The BMS workers report greater disapproval of leaders compared to all other union members. Table 4:23 also shows that the independent and INTUC workers show the same rates of disapproval and approval.

Table 4.23: Workers' perception of leaders as barriers to union cooperation by union

Q79\$\$	UNION				
	INTUC	CITU	BMS	Indep.	Total
Leaders do...					
Create barriers	58%	44%	66%	58%	55%
Not create barriers	42%	55%	34%	42%	45%
%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
(N)	(168)	(179)	(83)	(199)	(629)
Total	27%	28%	13%	32%	100%
$\chi^2 = 11.45$ p < .01					

\$\$ Do you agree or disagree? *External leaders create barriers against the different unions' cooperation in the factory.*

6. External leaders have failed to protect worker's interests in many of the recent labor disputes in Kerala (Q81).

On this question concerning the outcome of a series of labor strikes in Kerala immediately preceding the data collection in 1994, workers across all the unions agreed that the leaders could not deliver (Table 4.24). The CITU members were slightly less critical of their leaders than others.

Table 4.24 Workers' reaction to leaders' recent failures in disputes by Union

Q81xx	UNION				
	INTUC	CITU	BMS	Indep.	Total
Leaders did...					
Fail in Labor disputes	75%	60%	77%	71%	70%
Not Fail in labor disputes	25%	40%	23%	29%	30%
%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
(N)	(166)	(175)	(82)	(197)	(620)
Total	27%	28%	13%	32%	100%
$\chi^2 = 11.90$ p < .01					

xx Do you agree or disagree? *External leaders have failed to protect worker's interests in any of the recent labor disputes in Kerala* (Q81).

Index of disenchantment

The separate analysis of the six indicators of disenchantment with the external-political leadership yielded statistical associations significant at p between .01 and .001): CITU workers are more sympathetic to the leadership across all the indicators. It may be so because the members of CITU, which does not have a solid history of internal criticism, are reluctant to judge their leaders harshly.

The index of disenchantment was based on the six items discussed above. Two items intended to assess the workers' perception about the necessity of external political leaders for successful collective bargaining and efficient management of union were found to have no face validity to merit inclusion in the index of 'disenchantment' with the leadership. The perception that workers do not totally rely on these leaders in the collective negotiation process and in the day-to-day running of the union is no rejection of the leadership. More convincingly, in the inter-correlation analysis (Table D, Appendix II) of the original eight indicators, these two items (Q78 and Q80) did not measure up. All the steps described for index construction (earlier in relation to the index construction of 'economic orientation') were followed, and six of the original eight items were retained to compute the index of 'disenchantment with external-political leadership'.

The index was scored as follows. Disenchantment level varied from 0 to 6. Zero

meant the least disenchanted, and '6' implied the greatest extent of disenchantment. Zero through 3 was rated 'low', 3-4 was rated 'medium' and 5-6 'high'. This three-point scale of measurement was followed throughout the analysis.

Table 4.25: Workers' disenchantment (based on 6 indices) with their leaders by Union

Disenchantment	UNION				
	INTUC	CITU	BMS	Indep.	Total
Low	11%	25%	7%	13%	15%
Medium	39%	36%	27%	28%	33%
High	50%	39%	66%	59%	52%
%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	168	177	83	197	625
Total	27%	28%	13%	32%	100%
$\chi^2 = 33.87$ $p < .0001$ $N = 625$					

Table 4.25 shows that union membership and the degree of disenchantment are statistically associated. While 66% of BMS workers are highly disenchanted with the external leadership, 59% of the Independent workers share that level of disenchantment with their leadership. CITU are the least likely of all the groups to be highly disenchanted with their leadership. The statistical association is significant at $p < .0001$.

When the comparison is between the Independent unions and political unions, the former experience greater dissatisfaction (Table 4.26) than the latter. I

suspect that one of the precipitating factors for the emergence of independent unionism in Kerala and in other parts of India is this disenchantment with party unionism and with political leaders who seek to control the unions from the outside.

Table 4.26: Workers' disenchantment with their leaders by Union type

Disenchantment	UNION		
	Political	Independent	Total
Low	17%	13%	15%
Medium	35%	28%	33%
High	48%	59%	52%
%	100%	100%	100%
N	428	197	625
Total	69%	31%	100%
$\chi^2 = 5.99$ $p < .05$ N = 625			

The interpretation of the results should be qualified by the fact that the index is not seeking to measure the overall satisfaction of workers with their unions. It investigates a segment of their union experience, i.e., external political leadership. It is also possible that the responses might reflect not merely the workers' perception about their own leaders, but about the pattern of external-political leadership in general. At a later stage of data analysis, it would be shown how the workers express their satisfaction with the way their unions were 'conducting their business'.

Workers' fear of 'economic liberalization'

As indicated elsewhere, during the time (1994) of this survey, India was right in the middle of the Government policy of 'new economic openness' to the international markets. There was also animated debate on foreign investment by multinationals.

Workers expressed their fears surrounding these changes in different ways. 77% of all workers demand that major industries be brought under state control, and not be open to private investments (Table 4.27).

Table 4.27 Workers' attitude to nationalization vs. privatization of industry

'Major industries of the country should be owned by the State'	UNION				
	INTUC	CITU	BMS	Indep.	Total
Agree	72%	75%	85%	80%	77%
Disagree	28%	25%	15%	20%	23%
% (N)	100% (166)	100% (178)	100% (83)	100% (196)	100% (623)
Total	27%	29%	13%	31%	100%
$\chi^2 = 7.12$		p < .1			

Table 4.28: Workers' response to new emphasis on 'productivity'

'Workers are more interested in increasing the factory's productivity today'	UNION				
	INTUC	CITU	BMS	Indep.	Total
Agree	84%	90%	88%	85%	87%
Disagree	16%	10%	12%	15%	13%
% (N)	100% (168)	100% (178)	100% (82)	100% (195)	100% (623)
Total	27%	29%	13%	31%	100%
$X^2 = 3.788$		p=.285; no significance.			

87% of all employees believe that they are fully committed to the new demand for quality and productivity in work (Table 4.28). These responses show that members of all unions, irrespective of political or ideological positions, stand together on issues that are perceived to be threatening their job security and overall wellbeing. These results confirm the *hypothesis (#11) that workers experience strong fear regarding their job security.*

Workers' satisfaction with their union's style of functioning

In a previous section, employees' disenchantment with their external leaders was analyzed. However, workers reported that they were generally satisfied with their unions. 88% of all BMS workers said they were satisfied with the way unions work for them. Only 52% of Independent workers said they were contented with their union (Table 4.29). However, the disenchantment that workers across the unions felt regarding external leadership of union does not translate into alienation from the union as an organization or movement.

Table 4.29: Workers' satisfaction with their union's style of functioning.

'I am satisfied with my union's style of functioning'	UNION				
	INTUC	CITU	BMS	Indep.	Total
Agree	61%	71%	88%	52%	65%
Disagree	39%	29%	12%	48%	35%
%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
(N)	(166)	(178)	(83)	(193)	(620)
Total	27%	28%	13%	31%	100%
$\chi^2 = 36.91$ $p < .001$					

In an attempt to identify relevant variables that might explain the low level of satisfaction expressed by the independent union workers, a set of three-way tables was constructed and analyzed. Table 4:29.1 collapses the table above (Table 4:29) into a form that makes the comparison between the political and independent unions clearer.

Table 4:29.1 Workers satisfaction with union by union type

		UNION TYPE		
		Independent	Political	Total
Satisfied?	Yes	52%	71%	65%
	No	48%	29%	35%
	Total	100% (193)	100% (427)	(620)

$r = .18$; significance .0001

Table 4:29.2 Satisfaction by union type, controlling for skill level

		SKILLED?					
		YES			NO		
		UNION TYPE		UNION TYPE		UNION TYPE	
		Independent	Political	Independent	Political	Independent	Political
Satisfied?	Yes	50%	68%	61%	63%	76%	74%
	No	50%	32%	39%	37%	24%	26%
Total		100%(155)	100%(283)	(438)	100%(38)	100%(144)	(182)
		r = .18; significance .000			r = .12; significance .1		

Independent union members who are unskilled are more likely to be satisfied with their union than their skilled counterpart. Unskilled workers of the political unions have only slightly greater likelihood of being satisfied with their unions compared to their skilled peers. (Table 4:29.2)

Table 4:29.3 Satisfaction by union type, controlling for college education

		COLLEGE EDUCATED?					
		YES			NO		
		UNION TYPE		UNION TYPE		UNION TYPE	
		Independent	Political	Independent	Political	Independent	Political
Satisfied?	Yes	55%	60%	58%	53%	72%	67%
	No	45%	40%	42%	47%	28%	33%
Total		100%(40)	100%(53)	(93)	100%(149)	100%(373)	(522)
		r = .05; significance .60			r = .18; significance .000		

As shown in Table 4:29.3, college education has no effect on the level of satisfaction of the independent union employees. On the other hand, the non-college educated political unionists are more likely than their college educated peers to report satisfaction with their unions.

Table 4:29.4 Satisfaction by union type, controlling for party membership

BELONG TO A PARTY?							
YES							
NO							
UNION TYPE							
UNION TYPE							
Independent Political							
Independent Political							
Satisfied?	Yes	52%	73%	67%	53%	51%	52%
	No	48%	27%	33%	47%	28%	48%
Total		100%(156)	100%(390)	(546)	100%(37)	100%(36)	(73)
		r = .2; significance .000			r = .01; significance .9		

It has been established that the independent unions have a larger share of those workers who reported that they were not members or supporters of any political party. Table 4:29.4 shows that those who belonged to a political party and to a political union are very highly likely to be satisfied with their unions than those who did not belong to a party.

Table 4:29.5 Satisfaction by union type, controlling for CPM membership

BELONG TO COMMUNIST PARTY?							
YES							
NO							
UNION TYPE							
UNION TYPE							
Independent Political							
Independent Political							
Satisfied?	Yes	59%	74%	70%	50%	69%	63%
	No	41%	26%	30%	50%	31%	37%
Total		100%(51)	100%(128)	(179)	100%(141)	100%(299)	(440)
		R = .15; significance .04			r = .19; significance .000		

Though party membership did not have any effect on the satisfaction levels of independent workers, belonging to the communist party did influence their perception (Table 4:29.5). Independent workers who reported being members of the Communist party were more likely to express satisfaction with their union than those who did not belong to that party.

Table 4:29.6 Satisfaction by union type, controlling for sector (public vs. private)

EMPLOYED IN PUBLIC SECTOR?							
YES							
NO							
UNION TYPE							
UNION TYPE							
Independent Political							
Independent Political							
Satisfied?	Yes	60%	68%	66%	45%	74%	64%
	No	40%	32%	34%	55%	26%	36%
Total		100%(95)	100%(248)	(343)	100%(98)	100%(179)	(277)
r = .07; significance .15				r = .29; significance .000			

Public vs. private sector employment has differential effect on the level of satisfaction experienced by union workers. Independent workers of the private factories are less likely to be satisfied with their unions than their public sector counterparts. As seen in Table 4:29.6, the relationship is reversed in the case of political union workers: political unionists of the private sector are slightly more likely than their public sector peers to report satisfaction with their unions.

Table 4:29.7 Satisfaction by union type, controlling for gender

GENDER?							
MALE							
FEMALE							
UNION TYPE							
UNION TYPE							
Independent Political							
Independent Political							
Satisfied?	Yes	51%	72%	66%	70%	54%	57%
	No	49%	28%	34%	30%	46%	43%
Total		100%(183)	100%(390)	(573)	100%(10)	100%(37)	(47)
r = .21; significance .000				r = .13; significance .37			

Gender has equal but opposite effect on the level of satisfaction experienced by independent and political union workers. Male workers of the political unions and the female workers of the independent unions are highly likely to report the same (high) level of satisfaction with their respective unions. However, one should be cautioned that the

proportion of female workers in the sample is very small (Table 4:29.7).

The original relationship between satisfaction and union type is partially explained by skill, college education, sector of employment, party membership, membership in Communist party, and gender. The lack of fit between party and union membership of employees explains a large part of the difference in satisfaction expressed by the political and the independent union workers.

Workers also expressed their satisfaction about the way unions have enhanced their working lives. (Table 4.30). Though all workers gave high marks to their unions, BMS members led the others in being generous in their appreciation of union (85%). Independent workers were less satisfied about benefits (63%) in comparison with members of the political unions.

Table 4.30: Workers' perception of union's role in their work lives

'the quality of my working life has been greatly enhanced by my union'	UNION				
	INTUC	CITU	BMS	Indep.	Total
Agree	71%	72%	85%	63%	71%
Disagree	29%	28%	15%	37%	29%
% (N)	100% (167)	100% (177)	100% (83)	100% (194)	100% (621)
Total	27%	29%	13%	31%	100%
$\chi^2 = 14.66$		p < .005			

Union and social issues of national interest.

In an attempt to explore the truth of the observation by MacDonald³⁰ regarding Indian trade unions as a “cross between caste and true trade union organization”, data was analyzed to see how “secular” and “forward-looking” these unions were. This was done by identifying the workers’ response to a set of social issues of national importance. Just as industrial attitudes are associated with union and party membership, it is assumed that worker’s response to these issues also is affected by their inclusion in the party and union of their choice.

The issues, which are constantly debated in the public forum in India, are equal opportunity laws, reservation of quotas in education and employment for the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, protection of religious and linguistic minorities, and the role of women in the developing economy. Of late, the liberalization of the economy, and the developing openness to the global market system are also very sensitive items. On some of the issues, workers across parties and unions have identical attitudes. On others, association is found between union or party and social attitudes.

Only 39 % of all union members believe that people, irrespective of their religious and caste identities, enjoy equal opportunity in Indian society. Unions do not show significant variation in their judgement of the success of the policy of equal opportunity. Table 4.31 identifies workers’ agreement or disagreement with the statement that scheduled castes and tribes enjoy disproportionately large number of benefits in India. While 58% of the CITU members disagree, the majority of the other union members agree with the statement. More BMS

workers (69%) than others believe that scheduled castes and tribes do receive disproportionately large amount of benefits from the Government.

Table 4.31: Workers' attitude to 'Reservation Policy' by Union

Reservation Policy Statement*	UNION				
	INTUC	CITU	BMS	Indep.	Total
Agreement	65%	42%	69%	60%	57%
Disagreement	35%	58%	31%	40%	43%
% (N)	100% (167)	100% (178)	100% (83)	100% (198)	100% (626)
Total	27%	28%	13%	32%	100%
$\chi^2 = 27.36$		p < .001			

*Do you agree or disagree with the statement, "Scheduled castes and tribes enjoy disproportionately large number of benefits"? Agreement implies negative attitude to the existing national policy.

Table 4.32 analyzes the relationship between minority and majority communities in the country. 87% of the BMS employees, as compared to 55% of the INTUC workers and 56% of the Independent workers, agree with the statement, 'advantages granted to the minorities in the country adversely affect the majority population'. 58% of the CITU workers disagree. Negative sentiments towards the minorities are more widely shared among the BMS members.

Table 4.32: Workers' attitude to 'Minority Rights Policy' by Union

Minority Policy Statement*	UNION				
	INTUC	CITU	BMS	Indep.	Total
Agreement	55%	42%	87%	56%	56%
Disagreement	45%	58%	13%	44%	44%
% (N)	100% (166)	100% (177)	100% (83)	100% (196)	100% (622)
Total	27%	29%	13%	31%	100%
$\chi^2 = 45.23$					
$p < .001$					

*Do you agree or disagree with the statement, "Advantages granted to the minorities adversely affect the majority population"? Agreement implies negative sentiments towards the existing national policy.

The expression 'minorities' in India primarily refers to religious minorities such as Muslims, Christians, and Sikhs. While the 'minority rights policy' covers the non-Hindu religious communities, the 'reservation policy' (the quota system to help the disadvantaged groups in education and employment) covers the scheduled castes and tribes who belong to the Hindu religious majority. The minority rights policy guarantees, for example, the right of the religious minorities to establish their own educational institutions for their community, and to observe their religious laws concerning inheritance and marriage, and the right to profess and propagate their religion. This may explain why the Hindu party union's – the BMS – negative attitudes towards minority rights policy are more widely shared among them, compared to their negative feelings towards reservation policy affecting the (Hindu) backward castes. The non-Hindus do not have 'caste', and hence cannot benefit from reservation policy aimed at 'lower' or 'backward' castes and tribes.

The BMS union apparently reflected the views of the allied Hindu religious organizations that believe that the Hindu majority community is held hostage by political parties that engage in measures of appeasement of the minority communities for their electoral votes. These religious organizations and parties represent the Hindu middle classes and the middle and upper castes, and take the position that the 'reservation' policy works against the middle class majority's interests. The fiercest anti-reservation agitation periodically takes place in the BJP – BMS strongholds in the country.

The BMS shares in the nationalistic commitments of the allied political party (BJP) and the Hindu religious organizations like Viswa Hindu Parishat and Bajrang Dal. It is alarming to see that the current attacks on the Christian minorities in various parts of the country³¹ are increasing in scale and intensity. BJP, the major partner in the Central Government coalition ministry, and the BMS union are attempting to distance themselves from these fundamentalist Hindu religious organizations.

Another question investigated was the workers' attitude towards the role of women, and scheduled castes in industry and society. As shown in Table 4:33, those who disagreed with the statement about women's traditional role are assumed to take a more liberal and positive view of their role in society. 79% of the workers surveyed have that view. No variation was observed among unions in their response to this item. However, industrial sector-wise analysis showed that the workers employed in the public sector are more likely than others to espouse the more liberal view. How did men and women workers vary in their perception of the same?

Table 4:33 Workers' attitude towards women's role in society

'the most important role of women is to keep home and take care for children'	INDUSTRIAL SECTOR		
	Public	Private	Total
AGREE	17%	26%	21%
DISAGREE	83%	74%	79%
%	100%	100%	100%
N	344	281	625
Total	55%	45%	100%
$\chi^2 = 8.90$	$P < .005$		100%

In a three-way table analysis with worker's gender as control, it was further found that men are more likely to be liberal about women's role in society if (men are) employed in the public sector. There is no significant variation among women, based on their sector of employment, towards their role outside their homes. (Though the magnitude of percentage change is almost exactly reversed for men and women, the extremely small size of the female sample, no significant relationship would be obtained. See Tables 4:33a & 4:33b.)

Table 4:33.a. Attitude towards women's role by industrial sector

Controlling for sex = male

'the most important role of women is to keep home and take care for children'	INDUSTRIAL SECTOR		
	Public	Private	Total
AGREE	16%	27%	21%
DISAGREE	84%	73%	79%
%	100%	100%	100%
N	317	262	579
Total	55%	45%	100%
$\chi^2 = 10.46$	$P < .001$		100%

Table 4:33.b. Worker's attitude towards women's role by sector

Controlling for sex = female

'the most important role of women is to keep home and take care for children'	INDUSTRIAL SECTOR		
	Public	Private	Total
AGREE	22%	16%	20%
DISAGREE	78%	84%	80%
%	100%	100%	100%
N	27	19	46
Total	59%	41%	100%
$\chi^2 = .29$	$P < .5$		100%

A majority of the CITU union members think that not enough has been done for the scheduled castes and tribes through the quota system: preferential access of these communities to jobs and education. The role of the Communist parties in bettering the lot of scheduled caste communities in Kerala is beyond dispute. The Communist party was instrumental in major land reform legislation in Kerala that resulted in the entitlement of the landless tenant farmers to the land they were toiling on for years or even generations. The party was also on the forefront of organizing workers in those sectors which traditionally employed the members of the scheduled castes. So it is only logical that CITU would expect even more to be done for those communities.

Table 4:34 summarizes some of the key social attitudes shared by political and independent unions. Significant, but moderate, variation was observed among political unions towards the issue of nationalization of industry (Table 4:27); similar variation was seen in worker's attitude to women's role in society when (industrial) sectoral analysis was done (Table 4:33). It is significant that there are important issues on which unions do agree despite their political vs. independent status.

Table 4:34. Summary of shared social views by union type. (percentages do not add up)

Commonly shared attitudes	Union Type		
	Political %	Indep %	N
Favor Nationalization of Industry	76%	80%	623
Favor Women's greater role in society	79%	79%	625
Against existing 'reservation policy'	56%	60%	626
Against existing 'minority rights policy'	56%	56%	622
Favor productivity in industry	87%	85%	623

In light of the discussion above, it may be said that not all unions in Kerala today can be described in simple MacDonalidian language. They exhibit wide variation in terms of certain political beliefs and attitudes, although they come to share more similar attitudes towards other key social and economic realities of their lives. Variation in workers' attitudes cannot be reduced to their allegiance to their caste or community interests alone. The points of divergence and convergence will be summarized in the next and last chapter in the form of major findings and conclusions.

5

CONCLUSION

Summary of findings

Explanatory data analysis established significant associations between variables in the following hypotheses.

1. *The selection by individuals of a political party to support is associated with certain social and communal characteristics of the individual.*

Finding: Supported. Statistically significant associations are found between political affiliation and social characteristics like religion, caste, religiosity, father's occupation, educational attainment, and skill training.

2. *Political affiliation of industrial workers typically predates their employment history.*

Finding: Supported. 69.5% of all workers reported that they were politically affiliated with a party before they were employed. CITU and BMS workers are more likely than Independent and INTUC workers to have had a pre-employment political history.

3. *Trade union selection of industrial workers is often a function of their previous party allegiance.*

Finding: Supported. 80.6% of all respondents report that they chose a political party before they became members of their union. 95.5% of INC belong to INTUC; 85.5% of Communists chose to be in CITU; 97.8% of BJP joined BMS.

4. The ideological perceptions of political union members match the stated ideologies of the respective political parties.

Finding: Supported. There is substantial fit between the stated ideologies of the political parties and the ideological leanings of the respondents of different unions. BMS workers lean heavily towards Hindu Nationalism, CITU workers to political Marxism, INTUC to ideological eclecticism, and the Independent unionists to an economic pragmatism.

5. Indian trade unions perform like economic unions even as they fulfill important political and social roles in a still evolving democratic polity.

Finding: Supported. On a scale of high, medium, low economic orientation, Independents and INTUC score high, BMS and CITU score medium. The more extreme the political ideology, the less strong is its economic orientation.

6. Independent unions show greater signs of economic unionism than do political unions.

Finding: Supported. 34.8% of Independents are of high economic orientation, while 24.9% of all political unionists exhibit such orientation.

7. The members of independent unions participate more in their unions than in their political parties.

Finding: Supported. While 53.1% of Independent union workers report participating in their union activities at medium or high level, only 34.9% of them do so with regard to their political parties.

8. Independent workers participate in politics at a lower rate than their political union counterpart.

Finding: Supported. 46.8% of the members of political unions participate in their party activities at a medium or high level while 34.9% of Independents do so.

9. There is a high degree of disenchantment among the union members with regard to the existing leadership patterns (external and political leaders holding key positions).

Finding: Supported. Independents are more dissatisfied with the existing leadership patterns than their political union counterpart. Of all unions surveyed, BMS members are the most dissatisfied and CITU members the least dissatisfied with the current leadership type.

10. Workers experience strong fears regarding their job security in the wake of the new economic liberalization policy of the Central Government.

Finding: Workers across unions show a great desire for the Government ownership of major industries, and report stronger commitment to worker productivity.

Viewed in the context of the 'new economic openness' and liberalization, this is an indication of their fear of the new trends in privatization and productivity drive. No significant variations seen among unions.

11. Union members are satisfied with the way their unions are functioning in relation to their own advancement.

Finding: A substantial majority of all union members are satisfied with the style of functioning of their unions. Considerable variations exist among union members' strength of "union satisfaction". BMS are more likely than others to be highly satisfied with their union's style. Independents are least likely to show high union satisfaction.

The following hypothesis was not supported by the data.

12. *The members of Independent unions participate more in their unions than their counterparts in politically affiliated unions.*

Finding: The opposite is proven. Independent union members are less active in their union than political union members are in theirs.

Conclusions

Workers' decision to join a certain union is conditioned by his or her social origins. Caste and religion do play a direct role in their adoption of a political party and predispose them to join the union sponsored by that party. Thus unions in India can be said to have caste and communal characteristics in their origins and formation. But functionally they go beyond communal and caste interests, and represent true *worker interests*. They are bound by the strong ties of economic orientation. Even when they subscribe to differently articulated political ideologies, they are barely distinguishable in relation to their economic orientation.

Trades unions in India are predominantly organized and maintained politically. Through direct sponsorship or indirect association, political parties exert critical influence on their unions. The phenomenon of non-politically-ordered independent unionism is still the exception. There is no clear indication that the Indian labor union movement is headed

in the direction of adopting a non-political, independent organizational form. Both types of unionization will coexist in the industrial scene in India.

This study has identified some of the factors that explain the endurance of the political form of unionism. Today's unions remain linked to the historic National Freedom Struggle and its unfinished business of 'national reconstruction, and integration' through the mediation of political parties. Secondly, in Kerala, CITU and INTUC alternately enjoyed the political patronage of their parties, which were in power in the state legislature for the last 50 years. The Communist Marxist Party and the Indian National Congress Party ruled the state by themselves or in coalition fronts. Political patronage is significant for workers because the industrial relations structure, both nationally and locally, allows the party in power to take a lead role in settling disputes and securing economic advantage to the unions. Finally, as the data show, ideological convictions provided by the political parties serve as great motivators to the majority of workers in a nation that is still at the early stage of economic and industrial development.

Data analysis has yielded some explanations for the emergence of Independent unions among the industrial workers of India. Independent unions are representative of the trends like the following:

- (1) workers' growing disenchantment with external/political leaders of union.
- (2) workers' awareness that an ever-growing multiplicity of political unions weaken their bargaining power in the plant or industry.

- (3) an evolutionary shift in the definition of union's primary function -- from the overarching socialistic agenda to a pragmatic program, limited in scope and economic in content.
- (4) a beginning acceptance by sections of laborers of the legitimacy of the capitalist form of production and industrial organization in India's developing economy.
- (5) availability of non-political 'experts' as leaders who can 'manage' the union and its administration.

In assessing various aspects of the enduring political unions, and the emerging independent unions, one discovers that these two forms are going to survive alongside each other for some time to come. Based on this survey's limited data on independent unions, their members are not found to be as active in their unions as the political union workers are in theirs. The apathy of younger workers towards participation in the life of their union is not a hopeful sign for the future of unions in India. The younger independent workers are even more indifferent to political and union involvement. The Independent union organizers need to come to grips with this reality.

As long as political leaders are able to affect the outcome of industrial relations, as is the case in the current legal and conventional framework, political unions of major parties will continue to work toward political mobilization of its members. Indian National Trade Union Congress leads in mobilizing its workers for the Indian National Congress. The Center of Indian Trade Unions has been successful in maintaining its rank-and-file within Communist Marxist Party's fold.

Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh is organizing politically with a renewed vigor, now that their Bharatiya Janata Party is in power in the Central Government for the first time.

The data does not favor a niche argument for union forms. No relationship is found between company size (large or small), sector type (public and private sectors), industrial category (process or manufacturing) on the one hand and union form (political or independent) on the other. Both the forms exist side by side in all the industries/factories surveyed.

Political labor unions articulate different ideological preferences based on their party's manifesto. But the study provides strong evidence to suggest that both the independent and political forms of union look and feel more similar than different when work related issues are at stake. All of them show a clear economic orientation; all share equally in the fear of job insecurity resulting from the liberalization of economic and industrial policy. All have faith in the efficacy of collective bargaining; all agree that multiplicity of unions in the plant is detrimental to workers; all express a degree of disenchantment with the external political leaders, and yet report satisfaction with the way their unions were functioning. The emerging independent labor unions and the enduring political labor unions of India show similarities in some areas and differences in others.

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- ²⁷ G. W. Bohrnstedt and D. Knoke, "Statistics for Social Data Analysis" (Itasca, IL: F. E. Peacock Publishers Inc., 1988) 384.
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Appendix I

LIST OF VARIABLES

A. Original Variables

Q#	VARIABLE	VARIABLE LABEL	VALUES
1	COMPANY	Name of factory	1 - 4
2	UNION	Name of union center	1-3,5
3	GRADE	Grade of job	1 - 8
4	SKILL	Level of skill	1 - 3
5	INCOME	Annual Income	
6a	EDUC	Highest educational qualification	1-7,9
6b	TECH	Technical qualification	F, T
7	ORIGINS	Rural/Urban background	1 - 2
8	DOB	Birth year of respondent	
9	SEX	Sex of respondent	1 - 2
10	MARITAL	Marital status	1 - 2
11	CHILD	Number of respondent's children	
12			
13			
14	FATHJOB	Respondent's father's occupation	1 - 7

15	OTHINC	Source of income other than job	1 - 2
16	SOURCE	Type of source of income otj	1 - 3
17	RUPEES	Total income from sources otj	
18	RELIGION	Religion of respondent	1 - 3
19	CASTE	Hindu respondent's caste	1 - 4
20	DENOM	Christian respondent's denomination	1 - 3
21	FAITH	Faith in own religion's tenets	1 - 2
22	PARTYR	Current Relationship with party	1 - 3
23	PARTYN	Name of current party	1-6,9
24	PARTYF	First-ever party of respondent	1-6,9
25	PARTYS	Respondent's Switch among parties	1 - 2
26.1			
26.2			
27	PARTYQ	Reasons for Quitting party	1 - 6
28	UNSWITCH	Respondent's Switch among unions	1 - 2
30	MEMBER	Membership inspiration:party/union	1 - 2
31	PRIPAF	Party affiliation status	0,1,2,7
32	COMMIT	Commitment to Party/Union	1 - 4
33	DOJOB	Date of employment	
34	DOUNION	Date of joining union	
35	DOPOL	Date of first political vote	
36	NOJOB	Unemployment experience	1 - 2

37	YNOJOB	Reasons for unemployment	1 - 4
38	SHIFT	Length of shift work - years	
39	HAPYHR	Preferred shift of the respondent	1 - 3
40	UNIPAR	Union's party preference	1 - 4
41	UNICON	Self's Contribution to more unions	1 - 2
42	UNIMEM	Self's membership in more unions	1 - 2
43	OTHMEM	Others' memb'ship in more unions	1-2,8
44	SELFID	Self's class identification	1-3,8
45	ATTRID	Class id as attributed by others	1-3,8
46	WORKID	Self's working class id	1-5,8
47	PTIME	Frequency of own work for party	1 - 4
48	PFUND	„ of donation to party fund	1 - 4
49	PMEET	„ of attending party meetings	1 - 4
50	PLEAD	„ of being party leader	1 - 4
51	PNEWS	„ of being informed of party	1 - 4
52	PVOTE	„ cf voting in party elections	1 - 4
53	PDRIVE	„ of doing party mem'ship drive	1 - 4
54	PCAMP	„ of campaigning in P-election	1 - 4
55	PTALK	„ of talking with party leaders	1 - 4
56	UTIME	„ of own work for union	1 - 4
57	UMEET	„ of attending union meetings	1 - 4
58	UNews	„ of being informed of union	1 - 4

59	UVOTE	„ of voting in union elections	1 - 4
60	UDRIVE	„ of doing union mem'ship drive	1 - 4
60a	ULEAD	„ of having been leaders	1 - 4
61	UCAMP	„ of campaigning in U-election	1 - 4
62	UTALK	„ of talking with union leaders	1 - 4
63	UFUND	„ of donation to union fund	1 - 4
64	NAT_WKR	Aim of unions - nation/workers	1 - 2
65	MAX_MIN	„ - maximal/minimal	1 - 2
66	POL_ECO	„ - political/economic	1 - 2
67	EXT_INT	„ - state intervention/bargain	1 - 2
68	IDG_PRG	„ - ideology/pragmatism	1 - 2
69	LDEXTINT	Preferred leader - Extern/Intern	1 - 2
70	UNPOLNON	Preferred union - polit/nonpolit	1 - 2
71	LDPOLNON	Preferred leader - polit/nonpolit	1 - 2
72	UNPOLTRD	Preferred union - polit/trade	1 - 2
73	UNPOLIND	Preferred union - polit/industry	1 - 2
74	LINFW	Leader's influence on workers	1 - 4
75	LCOMM	„ commitment to labor movement	1 - 4
76	LDED	„ dedication to worker-interest	1 - 4
77	LINFM	„ influence over management	1 - 4
78	LBARG	„ bargaining power	1 - 4
79	LCOORD	„ coordinating ability	1 - 4

80	LEFFEC	„ efficiency level	1 - 4
81	LSUCCS	„ success rate	1 - 4
82	SOCIAL	Preference for state-control	1 - 4
83	EQUAULOP	Faith in equal opportunity laws	1 - 4
84	RESERVE	Resentment against reservations	1 - 4
85	FEMROLE	Attitude to woman's role in society	1 - 4
86	MINORITY	Attitude to minorities	1 - 4
87	UNISAT	Satisfaction with own union	1 - 4
88	PRODUC	Commitment to productivity	1 - 4
89	UNIBEN	Satisfaction with benefits of union	1 - 4
90	REGION	Region of birth	1 - 4

(B) Computed variables

- I. POLAFF Political affiliation before job
1. Prejob... 2. Postjob...
- II. AFFIL Political affiliation before union
1. Preunion... 2. Postunion...

(C) Indexes

- I. “Party Participation” (9 indicators)
II. “Union Participation” (9 indicators)
III. “Economic Orientation” (6 indicators)
IV. “Disenchantment” (6 indicators)

Appendix II

Table A: Intercorrelation of items forming the index of “party participation” of workers

Correlations:	Q48	Q49	Q50	Q51	Q52	Q53	Q54	Q55
Q47	.48	.75	.53	.62	.32	.69	.70	.56
Q48		.51	.28	.49	.39	.47	.49	.43
Q49			.56	.62	.35	.70	.68	.59
Q50				.46	.25	.58	.55	.47
Q51					.36	.60	.60	.57
Q52						.35	.33	.34
Q53							.73	.60
Q54								.62

(N = 619 p=.000 Missing values = 16)

Table B: Intercorrelation of items forming the index of “union participation” of workers

Correlations:	Q56	Q57	Q58	Q59	Q60	Q60a	Q61	Q62
Q57	.65							
Q58	.49	.56						
Q59	.29	.41	.42					
Q60	.69	.61	.50	.31				
Q60a	.52	.44	.32	.21	.57			
Q61	.35	.34	.34	.26	.42	.23		
Q62	.49	.54	.51	.41	.50	.33	.42	
Q63	.36	.39	.34	.37	.39	.25	.25	.45

(N = 593 p=.000 Missing values = 42)

Table C: Intercorrelation of items forming the index of “economic orientation” of workers

Correlations:	Q65	Q66	Q68	Q70	Q71	Q72
Q65	1.0000 (.614) P=.	.1647 (.614) P=.000	.2071 (.614) P=.000	.0419 (.614) P=.300	.1473 (.614) P=.000	.2127 (.614) P=.000
Q66	.1647 (.614) P=.00	1.0000 (.614) P=.	.0506 (.614) P=.211	.1303 (.614) P=.001	.1015 (.614) P=.012	.1303 (.614) P=.001
Q68	.2071 (.614) P=.00	.0506 (.614) P=.211	1.0000 (.614) P=.	.0940 (.614) P=.020	.1298 (.614) P=.001	.2811 (.614) P=.000
Q70	.0419 (.614) P=.300	.1303 (.614) P=.001	.0940 (.614) P=.020	1.0000 (.614) P=.	.3768 (.614) P=.000	.3784 (.614) P=.000
Q71	.1473 (.614) P=.000	.1015 (.614) P=.012	.1298 (.614) P=.001	.3768 (.614) P=.000	1.0000 (.614) P=.	.4666 (.614) P=.000
Q72	.2127 (.614) P=.000	.1303 (.614) P=.001	.2811 (.614) P=.00	.3784 (.614) P=.00	.4666 (.614) P=.00	1.0000 (.614) P=.

See Appendix IV for Survey Questionnaire items Q64 through Q72 forming the index of “economic orientation” of workers. The items Q64, Q67, Q69 and Q73 were dropped based on initial inter-correlation analysis and examination for variance.

Table D: Inter-correlations of items forming the index of "disenchantment" with leaders.

Correlations:Q74	Q75	Q76	Q77	Q78	Q79	Q80	Q81
Q74	.3461 (622) P= .000	.4289 (622) P= .000	.2862 (622) P= .000	.1660 (622) P= .000	.3058 (622) P= .000	-.1222 (622) P= .002	.3790 (622) P= .000
Q75		.4880 (622) P= .000	.2386 (622) P= .000	-.0276 (622) P= .492	.3178 (622) P= .000	-.1059 (622) P= .008	.3270 (622) P= .000
Q76			.3238 (622) P= .000	-.1418 (622) P= .000	.4301 (622) P= .000	-.1627 (622) P= .000	.4167 (622) P= .000
Q77				.0652 (622) P= .104	.1792 (622) P= .000	-.0195 (622) P= .627	.2604 (622) P= .000
Q78					-.1196 (622) P= .003	.5015 (622) P= .000	-.0891 (622) P= .026
Q79						-.1346 (622) P= .001	.3916 (622) P= .000
Q80							-.1297 (622) P= .001

Note: Items Q78 and Q80 were dropped from the list for index construction.

Appendix III

POLITICAL AND INDEPENDENT UNIONISM AMONG THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF KERALA (INDIA) by Paul Nalieth

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Serial Number:

1. Name of your company: (COMPANY)

FACT	1
HMT...	2
IAC.....	3
PTL.....	4

2. Name of your Union Center: (UNION)

INTUC..	1
CITU.....	2
BMS.....	3
Independent	5

3. Your job-grade:..... (GRADE)

4. Skill level of your job: (SKILL)

Skilled.....	1
Semi-skilled	2
Unskilled....	3

5. Your monthly wages: (INCOME)

Rs.....

6a. Your highest educational qualification: (EDUC)

No schooling.....	1
1st grade - 4th grade....	2
5th grade - 7th grade...	3
8th grade - 10th grade.	4
P.D.C./P.U.C.....	5
Bachelor's degree.....	6

Master's degree..... 7
 Any other..... 9

6b. Any technical qualificaion: (TECH)

No.....F
 Yes.....T

7. Your place of birth: rural or urban: (ORIGINS)

Village.....1
 Town.....2

8. What is your year of birth: (DOB) -----

9. Sex: (SEX)

Male.....1 Female.....2

10. Have you ever been married: (MARITAL)

Married....1 Never married..2

11. How many children do you have: (CHILD)

.....

12. What do they do for a living: (XXXX)

1.....
 2.....
 3.....

13. What is your aspiration about your sons' jobs: (XXXX)

1.....
 2.....
 3.....

14. Your father's occupation: (FATHJOB)

Agriculture..... 1
 Small business.... 2
 Daily wage labor 3
 Traditional/artisan.. 4
 Factory employment 5
 Offic/Govt. job..... 6
 Professional..... 7

15. Do you have any income other than your wages: (OTHINC)

Yes..... 1
 No..... 2

16. If 'yes', from what sources: (SOURCE)

Land.....	1
Real estate	2
Business.....	3

17. What is the income from each: (RUPEES)

Land:	Rs.....
Real estate	Rs.....
Business	Rs.....

18. Your religion: (RELIGION)

Hindu.....	1
Muslim.....	2
Christian....	3

19. If Hindu, what caste: (CASTE)

Ezhava.....	1
Nair.....	2
Scheduled caste/ST	3
Brahmins.....	4

20. If Christian, which denomination: (DENOM)

Orthodox.....	1
Protestant.....	2
Catholic.....	3

21. Do you believe seriously in your religion's tenets: (FAITH)

Yes.....	1
No.....	2

22. Your political affiliation: (PARTYR)

Have membership.....	1 (member)
No membership, only sympathy	2 (supporter)
No mem'ship, no sympathy.....	3 (outsider)

23. To which party do you belong today: (PARTYN)

Congress Party	1 (INC)
Communist Party (Marxist)	2 (CPM)
Communist Party of India	3 (CPI)
Bharatiya Janata Party	6 (BJP)
No party	7
Any other	9

24. Which was the first party that got your loyalty: (PARTYF)

Congress Party.....	1 (INC)
Communist Party (Marxist)	2 (CPM)
Communist Party of India	3 (CPI)
Muslim League.....	4 (ML)
Kerala Congress.....	5 (KC)
Bharatiya Janata Party.....	6 (BJP)
No party	7
Any other	9

25. Did you vote different parties in the past ten years:(PARTYS)

Yes.....1 No.....2

26. If 'yes' name them: (XXX)

party you quit..... 1
party you joined..... 2

27. Reasons for changing party: (PARTYQ)

Split in party.....	1
Corrupt leadership.....	2
Party friends' influence.	3
Union friends' influence	4
Candidate's quality.....	5
Personal reasons.....	6

28. Did you change union when you changed party: (UNSWITCH)

Yes..... 1
No..... 2

29. If 'yes', name them: (XXX)

union you quit.... 1
union you joined. 2

Choose the statement that you agree with (30, 31, 32).

30. (MEMBER)

My interest in party led to the union it supported..... 1
My interest in union led to the party it supported..... 2

31. (PRIPAF)
- | | |
|---|---|
| I joined the party first, and then the union. | 1 |
| I joined the union first, and then the party. | 2 |
| My party and my union are unrelated..... | 3 |
| I have no party affiliation | 4 |
32. (COMMIT)
- | | |
|---|---|
| Not interested in party, but interested in union | 1 |
| Not interested in party and union..... | 2 |
| Interested in party and union..... | 3 |
| Interested in party, not interested in union..... | 4 |
33. Year of joining this factory: (DOJOB)
34. Year of joining union: (DOUNION)
35. Year of your first political vote: (DOPOL).....
36. Were you unemployed for more than a year after joining this factory: (NOJOB)
- | | | | |
|----------------------|---|-------------------------|---|
| Yes, unemployed..... | 1 | No, not unemployed..... | 2 |
|----------------------|---|-------------------------|---|
37. If 'yes', for what reason: (YNOJOB)
- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| Strike..... | 1 |
| Lockout..... | 2 |
| Retrenchment... | 3 |
| Illness/accident. | 4 |
38. How many years did you 'shift-work': (SHIFT)
39. Which is your preferred type of shift: (HAPYHR)
- | | |
|----------------|---|
| Day shift..... | 1 |
| Night shift | 2 |
| Rotating shift | 3 |
40. To which party is your union sympathetic: (UNIPAR)
- | | |
|---------------------|---------|
| Congress party..... | 1 (INC) |
| Communist (CPM) | 2 (CPM) |
| BJP..... | 3 (BJP) |
| To none..... | 4 |
41. Do you donate to many unions: (UNICON)
- | | | | |
|----------|---|---------|---|
| Yes..... | 1 | No..... | 2 |
|----------|---|---------|---|

42. Do you have double (union) membership: (UNIMEM)

Yes..... 1 No..... 2

43. Do you know any others with double membership: (OTHEMEM)

Yes..... 2 No..... 2 Don't know... 8

44. Your social class as you perceive it: (SELFID)

Upper class. 1 Middle class 2
Lower class. 3 Don't know. 8

45. What, according to others, is a your class: (ATTRID)

Upper Class. 1 Middle class 2
Lower class. 3 Don't know. 8

46. Identify your group from the following: (WORKID)

Workers.....	1	Working Class.....	2
Industrial Workers	3	Industrial Working Class	4
Affluent Workers..	5	Any other.....	9

Choose the most appropriate answer for the following:

Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	2	3	4

47. Spending time for the party(PTIME)

48. Donating for the party fund..... (PFUND)

49. Attending party meetings..... (PMEET)

50. Holding leadership positions..... (PLEAD)

51. Reading party literature..... (PNEWS)

52. Voting in elections..... (PVOTE)

53. Participating in membership drives (PDRIVE)

54. Campaigning in elections..... (PCAMP)

55. Communicating with party leaders (PTALK)

56. Spending time for the union..... (UTIME)
 57. Attending union meetings..... (UMEET)
 58. Reading Union literature..... (UNEWS)
 59. Voting in union elections..... (UVOTE)
 60. Participating in mem'ship drives. (UDRIVE)
 60a Having been in leadership position (ULEAD)
 61. Campaigning in union elections (UCAMP)
 62. Communication with union officers (UTALK)
 63. Donating to union fund..... (UFUND)

Choose the best answer that describes what you think unions should ideally do:

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|-----------|
| 64. The nation's development.... | 1 | (NAT_WKR) |
| The workers' development.... | 2 | |
| 65. Workers' ownership of industry | 1 | (MAX_MIN) |
| Solving day to day problems..... | 2 | |
| 66. Political interests..... | 1 | (POL_ECO) |
| Economic interests..... | 2 | |
| 67. State Intervention..... | 1 | (EXT_INT) |
| Collective Bargaining.. | 2 | |
| 68. Vote its political party to power | 1 | (IDG_PRG) |
| Improve the lot of labor | 2 | |

Choose the best answer:

69. Union leadership is safer in the hands of: (LDEXTINT)
 External leaders.. 1
 Internal leaders... 2
70. Union organization is stronger when: (UNPOLNON)
 it is organized politically 1
 it is independent..... 2

71. Union leadership is safer in the hands of: (LDPOLNON)

Politicians..... 1
Non-Politicians 2

72. Union is stronger when: (UNPOLTRD)

Politically organized..... 1
organized on the basis of trade 2

73. What would be better for workers: (UNPOLIND)

one party for all workers..... 1
one union per factory/industry 2

Indicate your agreement/disagreement with following statements

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	2	3	4

74. Influence of political-external leaders
among workers has waned: (LINFW)

75. Multiplicity of unions results from
leaders' rivalries: (LCOMM)

76. Politically active leaders generally fail
to protect workers' interests: (LDED)

77. Influence of political external leaders over the
management has waned: (LINFM)

78. Workers absolutely need the help of external
leaders in the matter of collective
bargaining: (LBARG)

79. External leaders create barriers
against the unions' cooperation
in the factory: (LCOORD)

80. External leaders are essential for the efficient
working of my union: (LEFFEC)

81. External leaders have failed to protect workers' interests in many of the recent labor disputes in Kerala: (LSUCCS)
82. All major industries of the country should be owned and controlled by the State: (SOCIAL)
83. All Indians, irrespective of religion and caste, enjoy 'equal opportunity' to improve their lives: (EQUALOP)
84. Scheduled castes and tribes enjoy disproportionately large number of benefits: (RESERVE)
85. The most important role of women is to keep home and take care of children: (FEMROLE)
86. Advantages granted to the minorities in the country adversely affect its majority population: (MINORITY)
87. I am satisfied with my union's style of functioning: (UNISAT)
88. Workers are interested in increasing the factory's productivity today, more than before: (PRODUC)
89. The quality of my working life has been greatly enhanced through my union: (UNIBEN)
90. Name the district you were born in: (REGION)

Ernakulam.....	1
North of EKM.	2
South of EKM.	3
Out of Kerala...	4

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