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AITUC FIFTY YEARS

Documents

Volume One

Introduction by
S. A. Dange

AITUC PUBLICATION

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DOCUMENTS

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With an Introduction by
S. A. DANCE

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CONTENTS

<i>Introduction</i>	ix-xc
(i) The Foundation Thoughts and Forces of the AITUC	ix
(ii) Origins of the AITUC	xxxiv
(iii) The Dais and the Floor	lxxi
(iv) International Affiliation	lxxxiii
1. FIRST INAUGURAL SESSION OF ALL INDIA TRADE UNION CONGRESS	1-79
Preliminary Note	3
Proceedings of the First Session of the All India Trade Union Congress	9
Mr Baptista's Welcome Address	11
Election of President	19
Presidential Address	23
Messages from British Labour	37
Appointment of Standing Committee	44
Other Resolutions	47
President's Closing Speech	64
Deputation to the Governor	66
Executive Committee Meetings (November 1920 to September 1921)	75
Manifesto to the Workers of India	78

<i>Appendices</i>	80-100
(i) Names of Members of the Standing Committee	80
(ii) List of Affiliated and Sympathising Unions	82
(iii) Trade Union Congress Accounts	85
(iv) Bombay Central Labour Federation (Constitution)	87
(v) AITUC (Draft Constitution and Rules)	90
2. SECOND AITUC SESSION	101-88
Between First and Second Congress	103
Proceedings	107
Welcome Address (Speech by Seth Ramjash Agarwalla, Chairman Reception Committee)	128
Presidential Address	140
Statements of AITUC Publicity Bureau	154
Bombay to Jharia in Indian Press	160
Extracts from the <i>Indian Annual Register</i> , 1922	179
3. ADDENDA	189-221
Tilak Trial Disturbances—1908	191
Bombay Workers' First Political Strike—1908 (<i>by D. C. Home</i>)	213
<i>Index</i>	223

Introduction

BY S. A. DANCE

I. The Foundation Thoughts and Forces of the AITUC

I

More than two generations have passed since the AITUC was founded. The working class of today, especially its younger generation, is no longer what it was at the time of the foundation of the AITUC in 1920. Things have changed out of recognition in every respect.

It is necessary for the workers of today to know how and for what they fought yesterday. Knowledge of history is one of the most essential weapons to fight the present and future battles.

A good exhaustive history of the working class in India has not yet been written, despite the fact that the first modern factories, i.e. machine production, and the first generation of the modern Indian worker began to appear in the 1850s, more than a hundred years ago. There have been some short studies of this or that aspect of the workers' struggles. There have even been short surveys of the hundred years of sufferings, battles, gains of the workers and their trade unions in the economic and political fields done by leaders of the trade-union movement, some political parties and also by writers from the middle-class intelligentsia. Some partial surveys of well-known strikes have also

been published. But a real comprehensive history fitting the grandeur and heroism of our class, its sacrifices and gains, the most violent, diabolical and inhuman forces of both foreign imperialism and native capitalism that it had to fight and has yet to fight, still remains to be written. The task is big but necessary.

In order to be of some help in that task, the AITUC decided to publish such documents as are available in its archives, though they are not very voluminous. We intend to bring out particularly the reports of its annual sessions, as far as they are available. In this volume we are giving the reports of the founding session of 1920 and the second session of 1921.

II

The period of 1919 to 1922 was one of tremendous national upheaval, a period of revolutionary uprisings of the Indian people against British imperialism and for national liberation. It was not an isolated phenomenon of Indian history. It was a part of the processes of world revolution against imperialism. It appeared in two forms. One was the revolutionary movement of the working class for liberation from capitalism and for establishment of socialism; and the other was the liberation movement of oppressed nations for liberation from imperialism.

The first push to this process was given by the October Revolution of 1917 in Russia under the leadership of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks). That revolution performed two tasks. It established the rule of the working class in Soviet Russia and, secondly, it liberated all the nations oppressed by tsarist imperialism by giving them the complete rights of self-determination and freedom.

This new state of the working class and the Bolshevik Party in their manifesto declared support to all the oppressed nations of the world in their freedom movements and to all workers in their struggle for socialism.

With this break in the chain of world imperialism, whose forces had been seriously weakened by the first world war, the liberation movements gathered strength, not only in India but also in China, Indonesia, Egypt, Turkey, Persia and many other countries.

Uprisings of the working class came up in many European countries, beginning with the German revolution in 1918, followed by the Hungarian, the Czech, the Yugoslav, etc. Big general strikes began in England and the Irish rebellion struck its blows against British rule.

We need not follow the history of these revolutions here. We mention them only to point out that the great revolutionary upheaval that began in India at the end of the first world war was a part of the world process and not an isolated Indian or Asian phenomenon.

III

Moreover it was not an unconscious part of the world process. The October Revolution had a direct impact on the Indian and Asian developments. It directly and openly appealed to the oppressed nations to overthrow the imperialist yoke. Secondly, it spoke to the exploited masses, particularly the workers and peasants, against landlord-capitalist exploitation. Even ordinary workers, awakened into political consciousness by the burden of the war and its consequences, spoke of how the capitalists and landlords had been liquidated in Soviet Russia. The Anglo-Indian press, who took special care to spread such news with the idea of frightening the richer classes in India, only helped to carry the core of the message of the October Revolution to the masses in India. When Churchill denounced Soviet Russia as the arch-enemy of the British empire, it only made Indians feel friendly to that country and its revolution.

The other revolution which had some impact on us was the Irish rebellion. The home-rule movement of Ireland had been copied here to express India's constitutional de-

mands for "self-government" or home rule. An All India Home Rule League also had been founded with branches throughout the country. With the armed uprisings of the Irish Sinn Fein for complete independence and separation from Britain, the home-rule slogan receded there. In India also with the radicalisation of the masses and partly due to the differences that cropped up among the leaders, particularly between Tilak and Mrs Besant, the Home Rule Leagues paled away. The Irish rebellion, however, could not provide any special ideological appeal as such. Their subsequent settlement with Britain and the civil war that broke out among the Irish parties over the settlement put the Irish out of Indian political mind as an example to think of.

The Germans used to have some special links with the Indian revolutionaries. The German imperialists had ambitious plans to fight the British imperialists, capture their colonies and establish themselves as a world power. So they gave shelter to emigre Indian revolutionaries and promised to supply arms to the Indian revolutionary groups, who wanted to plan armed uprisings or armed actions to liquidate members of the British ruling class by the tactics of individual annihilation.

But such help did not materialise very much, as the mass base within the country for an armed rebellion was lacking. Acts of individual annihilation, besides proving costly, became only indicators of protest and sharp discontent, incapable of overthrowing the government or seriously dislocating its power. The German imperialists could not provide any ideological appeal of national liberation as they themselves had attacked the liberation movements of China and Africa, in order to capture colonies and markets for their own imperialist ambitions. The German revolution of 1918 had also made no direct appeal to the oppressed nations nor to the oppressed and exploited masses of the world. Let alone talking of the emancipation of the oppressed nations and the exploited classes, the "socialist"

government of the German social-democrats, led by Kautsky, Seheidemann and Noske, suppressed even their own workers with gun and fire, because they tried to take the revolution to the socialist road and began the takeover of the big German monopolies. They did not want the German people to go the way of the October Revolution and working-class rule. Even some of the few Indian emigre revolutionaries, who had taken shelter in Germany, wended their way to Moscow, though they had not wedded themselves to any ideology of communism. The fact that Raja Mahendra Pratap and members of his "Government of the Indian Republic" in exile went to Moscow to see Lenin and not to Germany to see Kautsky for help was a fact of immense meaning for the Indian revolution and Indian history.

In the make-up of the ideology of our intelligentsia other past revolutions also had a place. Mazzini and Garibaldi of the Italian liberation movement had a big appeal. Many books were written about them. The Hungarian revolution and its leader Kossuth were also studied. The French revolution was taught in the universities, but there the reactionary views of Edmund Burke or the hero-worship philosophy of Carlyle were emphasised. The study of the American war of independence brought forth the slogan of boycott and volunteer army. But all these had no direct relation with current history.

IV

Thus only the Russian Revolution of October 1917 impressed itself on the minds of the Indian people, and particularly the working class, by its national-revolutionary and class-emancipatory role and ideology. The very first session of the AITUC appreciated this fact of history. To put before the Indian worker the role of the Russian revolution and to denounce its imperialist detractors and draw lessons from its successes for the benefit of the ideological

and political attitudes of the Indian working-class and trade-union movement—was all done in the AITUC in its very founding session. The finest statement on this subject came from the presidential address of Lala Lajpat Rai. And it is worth remembering that Lalaji was not a communist nor was there a single communist at the AITUC session in 1920 to inspire or incite such sentiments and thoughts.

Speaking about the different levels at which the world movement of the working class stands, the presidential address says:

“While it is true that the interests of labour are the same all the world over, it is equally true that the power of labour in each country is limited by local and national circumstances. Labour in Europe is in a position to dictate. European workmen have found out that to depend for the enforcement of their right and the amelioration of their condition on the political action of persons who owe their legislative power and position to the vote of men of property is absurd and unnatural. In order to protect the interests of himself and his class, the workman must have a vote and he must give it to a man of his class or to a man pledged to his interests. So every man in Europe is a political unit. Over and above this, European labour has found another weapon in direct action. On the top comes the Russian worker who aims to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat.

“We, in India, have not yet reached the first stage. The government have not given us votes. As at present situated, they will oppose us at every step. They will not even hesitate to use all the forces of militarism at their disposal to crush our efforts towards united action and to keep us dis-united, unorganised and out of touch with world affairs. They have illustrated this by their action in the matter of the Lahore Railway Strike, the Government Press Strike at Calcutta and Simla and the Postal and Telegraph Strike in Bombay.

“Their recent action in prohibiting the importation of

Soviet Russia and the *Daily Herald* of London is also an illustration to the point. While the Anglo-Indian press is engaged day and night in disseminating palpable lies about Soviet Russia, the Government of India steps in to prevent the people of India from knowing the other side of the story.”¹

Then the president of the AITUC, Lala Lajpat Rai, makes a most devastating and revolutionary statement on what is “truth”. He says:

“Truth in Europe is of two kinds: (a) capitalistic and governmental truth represented by men like Mr Winston Churchill and papers like the *London Times* and the *Morning Post*, and (b) socialistic and labour truth represented by labour organs of the type of *Justice*, *Daily Herald* and *Soviet Russia*.

“The Government of India wants us to swallow the first kind of truth without knowing the other side. Unfortunately for us, truth is no longer truth. It is qualified by capitalism and imperialism, on the one hand, and socialism on the other. It is either capitalistic or bourgeois or socialistic. In order to know the whole truth, one has to know all the three brands and then use his judgement. My own experience of Europe and America leads me to think that socialistic or even bolshevik truth is any day better, more reliable and more human than capitalistic and imperialistic truth.”²

While endorsing the different levels at which the world labour movement stands and while unhesitatingly putting the Russian worker “on the top” with his dictatorship of the proletariat, the AITUC president has a word of caution and historical realism. He says:

“There is no one in India who believes that the European and Russian standards of labour can be applied to the India of today. If there were any I would remind him or them of the message of Lenin to Bela Kun, wherein the former

1. *Infra*, pp. 32-33.

2. p. 33.

warned the latter against the danger of applying Russian standard to Hungary prematurely. For the present our greatest need in this country is to organise, agitate and educate. We must organise our workers, make them class-conscious and educate them in the ways and interests of commonweal.”³

V

One need not be surprised at the forthright way in which the AITUC president showed sympathy with the Soviet Union and socialist or bolshevik truth. The question is how did the bourgeois leaders who were present in the session tolerate such attitudes? It was because the British ruling class and its representatives in India and all the press organs under their control denounced the national struggle and its leaders like Tilak and Gandhi as being “instigated” by the bolsheviks. It was not only in India but all the world over that the ruling classes denounced all progressive and liberation movements as being bolshevik-inspired.

It was at this period in history that the workers in Britain, France and other European countries were showing signs of revolutionary upheavals. The war of aggression that the imperialists had launched against Soviet Russia in aid of the civil war was suffering defeats. Everywhere the cry was raised: Hands off Russia! The British forces which had tried to advance towards Afghanistan to conquer it and make way through it to attack Soviet Russia had suffered a severe defeat at the hands of the Afghans at the battle of Jalalabad. Rumours were set afloat by the British press that the bolsheviks were planning to invade India. Such rumours instead of frightening the people were eagerly believed and they got credence from the fact that the Soviet government had sent enormous military help to the Turkish revolution led by Kemal Ataturk, which the

British were trying to defeat by helping Greece to invade Turkey. In India the leadership of the national movement had declared its support to the Turkish war of independence. And so indirectly our national movement and the bolsheviks found themselves on the same side on the main crucial issue of the day, i.e. the overthrow of imperialism.

It is this position that dominated the sentiments and statements of the leadership and the masses at the first and second sessions of the AITUC. Hence the representatives of both the workers and the national bourgeoisie sat on the same platform of the AITUC and heard Lalaji without demur. As witness to this fact there were sitting on the dais of the session representatives from the British Trades Union Congress, the Irish Trade Union Congress, the British Labour Party and the Independent Labour Party.

While on this subject of AITUC's international outlook, it would be worthwhile to keep in mind the fact that in this period of history, US President Wilson had announced America's adherence to the principle of self-determination to settle world affairs, especially the affairs of the colonial and subject world. The statesmen of all nations had hailed the pronouncement but neither the British nor the French and not even the US cared to apply it to their own colonial possessions. Only Soviet Russia had put it in practice long before the hypocrites of imperialism beat their drums about the fine principles of self-determination.

It may not be out of place here to jump a period in history to remind people that the same US and British leadership during the second world war declared the same principles in a new form, called the Atlantic Charter. But at the end of the war, the Trumans and Churchills, like their predecessors, Wilson and Lloyd George, betrayed their word and tried to suppress the liberation movement in the same old way. But this time imperialism itself suffered a defeat and the colonial system collapsed. To those like me, who had seen the first session of the AITUC in 1920, what a fantastically new world of socialism and national freedom it was

that greeted them fiftythree years later when we met at the 29th session of the AITUC at Calcutta in 1973!

VI

What were the other basic norms and values that the founding session of the AITUC declared? There are *three basic ideas* that the presidential address emphasised: *one*, class consciousness; *two*, international proletarian brotherhood; *three*, the place of nationalism in the class outlook.

The working class is an altogether new class in history, brought forth by new instruments of production and a new mode of production, i.e. the capitalist system. In order to emancipate itself, defend itself, it must become class-conscious and organise and act as a class. He says:

“We are living in an age quite different from anything that the world has seen or known before...

“This modern world is characteristically a world of machinery, of steam, gas and electricity. This is a world of mass production, of organised capital, organised industry and organised labour. Organised mass production involves the organisation of capital and organisation of labour on a scale never heard of before. So far, organised capital had its way. It has ruled the world for the last 150 years, and the world today is groaning under its burden. It has destroyed many an old civilisation, enslaved religion, chained science and placed in bondage all the forces of nature and human intellect. Humanity is its bond slave.”

Then our president cites two examples of this shattering power of capital. He says:

“Old China with its four to five hundred millions of industrious hard-working and art-loving peoples, with its ancient culture and art, has been broken on the wheel and thrown to the wolves. India with its hoary civilisation, its mighty spiritualism, its great philosophy and its beautiful art, with a family consisting a one-fifth of the whole human

race, has also been bled white by the forces of organised capital and is today lying prostrate at its feet."

Maybe some people will separate capitalism from the category of imperialism. Some may even plead that some capitalism or capitalists are so good and nonviolent by nature or by their "national character" that they may not develop into imperialism and its accompaniment of militarism. Not to give way to such illusions, the president says:

"Militarism and imperialism are the twin children of capitalism; they are one in three and three in one. Their shadow, their fruit and their bark, are all poisonous."

The remedy to this poison? "It is only lately that an antidote has been discovered and that antidote is organised labour."⁴

Think as a class, organise and act as a class—is the most valuable thought that the president put to the AITUC as the foundation thought of its ideology.

Class solidarity and consciousness has no place for caste divisions or religious differences. Whatever validity they had in the past, they have no place in the modern struggle against capitalism and imperialism and for a new society based on socialism, which is the negation of the three-in-one poison bark.

The second basic idea he set forth was on internationalism.

The question is: could not class solidarity be limited to the national level only? Must it be international? Must we take up the principle of proletarian internationalism and the slogan of "Workers of the World, Unite!"?

There was no such slogan hanging from the festoons of the first session of the AITUC. But the president made it clear that the working class is an international class and must organise and act as such. Giving his reasons, he says:

"Capital is organised on a worldwide basis; it is backed up by a financial and political strength beyond conception;

its weapons are less perishable than those employed by labour; it presents dangers that apply universally. In order to meet these dangers, Indian labour will have to join hands with labour outside India also, but its first duty is to organise itself at home.”⁵ And further on, he asserts the proposition that “the interests of labour are the same all the world over.”⁶

The third basic idea he put forth was that in the fulfilment of its tasks, the working class must refuse to be deceived by false appeals of bourgeois nationalism or needs of national economy, etc.

Every trade unionist knows how the bourgeoisie uses the arguments of nationalism, national growth and national security to put down the demands of the working class for a decent wage and living conditions and for democratic rights.

In the days of British occupation, this argument was used even to justify twelve and fifteen hours’ work a day and denial of a Sunday holiday or prohibition of child labour. To this the president’s reply was:

“If labour must remain half-starved, ill-clothed, badly housed, and destitute of education, it can possibly have no interest in the development of Indian industries, and all appeals in the name of patriotism must fail.”⁷

If that was the attitude of one of the greatest patriots in the preindependence days, how much more valid it should be in the presentday independent India!

The argument of “nationalism” is used by the bourgeoisie and particularly its intellectual defenders in every country to make the working class serve the interests of capital, especially in its competition with foreign capital. He said:

“The interests of Indian industries, they say, require that labour in this country should be plentiful and cheap. There may be something in that argument, but the way in which it is represented in season and out of season carried it too

far. We are not prepared to admit the validity of this plea. Under the shelter of nationalism, European capitalists have created sufficient havoc in the world, and we are not prepared to listen with equanimity to that cry being overdue in India. An appeal to patriotism must affect the rich and the poor alike, in fact, the rich more than the poor.”⁸

There was the question of “outsiders” in the trade-union movement. Government and employers denounced those intellectuals, social workers, lawyers and barristers for their “interference” in disputes and strikes. The president’s address countered this view and called upon “such brain workers in the ranks of labour who are educated enough to lead the movement” to show a spirit of sacrifice. “For some time to come, they need all the help and guidance and cooperation they can get from among the intellectuals as are prepared to espouse their cause. Eventually labour shall find its leaders from among its own ranks.”⁹ And thousands of intellectuals of India have shown that spirit of sacrifice which the foundation congress of the AITUC demanded of them.

We have gone in so much detail and so much restatement of the basic points of the foundation address regarding such questions as the class outlook and international solidarity, attitude towards the various phases of the world’s working-class movement and the world revolution, including the October Revolution, the question of relation between national interests and working-class interests, because it has been said that the AITUC in its original cast had none of these attitudes and that it was merely a “welfare” organisation. It has also been said that it is the communists who brought these questions on the platform of the AITUC and hence forced the others to split away from the AITUC and start new organisations wedded to “pure trade unionism”, as they found its original objectives vitiated. Hence it was necessary to emphasise these points from the presidential

address. It is equally necessary to note that these basic points were not the personal views of Lala Lajpat Rai. Many of them found endorsement not only in other speeches but also in the resolutions of the AITUC.

VII

While emphasising the great advance that the AITUC represented at that period in our history, it would not be correct to ignore some of its weaknesses. The biggest failure was that the AITUC at its founding session did not adopt any political resolution on the question of national freedom and swaraj. Why was it so?

The mass movement was already advancing towards an open revolt against the British rulers. The peasants had begun to move against the landlords in the countryside and their British protectors. The Indian soldier, who had just returned from the war front, finding himself demobbed and unemployed, had begun to take over the local leadership of the movement in his hands. Big general strikes were taking place on the railways, posts and telegraphs, jute and cotton textiles, mines and tea gardens. Taking note of this, the British imperialists had already embarked on suppressing the rising tide of the revolution by moving their army into action, as was seen in the Jallianwala Bagh massacres, the killings of tea-garden workers, the Jamshedpur strikers, the strikers in mines, etc., the bombing of the villages and railway stations in the Punjab and banning the entry of the leadership of the National Congress into those areas.

At the same time, the British imperialists were offering to the Congress some constitutional reforms, in order to divert the revolutionary mass upsurge and secure the help of the Congress leadership in tiding over the postwar revolutionary crisis.

The Amritsar session of the National Congress of 1919 was sharply divided on the question of the constitutional reforms offered by the Montagu-Chelmsford report. While

Lokmanya Tilak, at that time the radical leader of the Congress, did not want unconditional acceptance of the niggardly reforms, Mahatma Gandhi, who had not yet shed his earlier illusions about the virtues of the British raj, wanted full and wholehearted acceptance, in which he was supported by Mrs Besant and many others. Ultimately the essence of Tilak's standpoint with some compromise was unanimously approved.

Very soon, however, the atrocities at Jallianwala Bagh and other events combined with Tilak's forthright opposition to Gandhi's political line changed Gandhi's old attitude, from one of cooperation with the British to that of noncooperation. But the moderate anti-struggle wing which had supported him earlier left him. And so matters were left to be clinched at the special session of the Congress at Calcutta in September 1920, presided over by Lala Lajpat Rai.

The session, however, was overshadowed by the death of Tilak on 1 August 1920 and the question of launching a political mass struggle for swaraj was left to be finally decided at the Nagpur session in December 1920. All sections and factions of the national political leadership began to mobilise for the great and decisive struggle at Nagpur.

The AITUC was guided principally by the Congress leaders. The masses at this period were being led by Lokmanya Tilak and his group, in which Lala Lajpat Rai from Punjab, Bepinchandra Pal from Bengal and others had a big place. Mahatma Gandhi had refused to sponsor the idea of founding the AITUC and so he did not attend. Tilak was one of the vice-presidents of the reception committee, and was the moving spirit of the Bombay working class, which fully backed the holding of the AITUC session in Bombay. But Tilak died on 1 August. So the session which was timed to meet on 22 August was postponed to October.

With the differences in the Congress leadership which had come in the open in the September session of the Congress, the AITUC leadership could not take any political stand on

the question of swaraj and the political movement for national freedom. Hence at the first AITUC session in October 1920, though it met one month after the Calcutta Congress of September but two months before the decisive Nagpur Congress of December, *the AITUC remained almost silent on the national political demand.*

We say "almost" because the floor of the AITUC session was resounding with slogans of the great strikes that were taking place in Bombay and elsewhere. Slogans of Tilak, Gandhi and swaraj were also being given from the floor. But the leadership from the platform would not talk of "swaraj" and the freedom movement, because it was divided. And with Mrs Besant, Wadia and the British gentlemen on the platform, the clear voice of the masses and the slogan of swaraj could not be embodied in a political resolution.

These weaknesses and the confusion in the leadership were reflected in the speech of the president himself. Despite the fine positions taken by him on other basic matters, he vacillated when it came to the question of opposing the British government and calling for swaraj. Of course everybody spoke in general of freedom and oppression. But there was no resolution on the national question. The result was that in the presidential speech we find the following prevaricating statement, which perfectly reflects the undecided position of the National Congress leadership. While coming to the end of his speech, he said:

"I do not think I should detain you, Ladies and Gentlemen, more than a minute. In this minute, I want to explain our attitude to government. It is neither one of support nor that of opposition."¹⁰ Though this was said primarily in reference to the proposal to seek the British government's mediation and arbitration in the pending labour disputes, yet it reflects the position of the national political leadership two months before the famous Nagpur Congress of 1920, which launched the movement of noncooperation

with government for the demand of swaraj. So this statement had not the limited reference as it may look superficially. Moreover Lalaji personally was in the camp of those at this time who were somewhat undecided and uncertain as to what position to take at Nagpur on the non-cooperation programme of mass struggle for swaraj. He was not opposed to it in principle, as he had supported that slogan in the revolutionary period of 1905-8, only he was worried if it was not premature and whether the masses would respond.

VIII

We have mentioned this to show how closely the AITUC was following the political leadership of the National Congress. This is confirmed by the fact that when the Congress launched the militant noncooperation movement and threw overboard constitutionalism with its goal of dominion status and opted for swaraj and that also "within one year", the second session of the AITUC at Jharia held on 1 December 1921 immediately adopted as its first resolution on the agenda the following political resolution which said:

"That this Trade Union Congress declares that the time now has arrived for the attainment of swaraj by the people of India."¹¹

This resolution was in the footsteps of the Nagpur resolution of the National Congress. It may be worth noting, however, that it did not include that clause of the National Congress resolution which said that swaraj is to be attained by "legitimate and peaceful means".

Whether the omission was deliberate or not we cannot say, as the proceedings do not report any discussion on that clause and there were no amendments.

The omission of the clause was not because of any more radical attitudes or disagreement on the part of the

11. pp. 111-12.

AITUC leadership. It was due to the fact that the slogan of "Swaraj in one year!" which had been given by Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress was expected to be an accomplished fact on 31 December 1921. Hence the political resolution of the AITUC adopted on 2 December simply declared "that the time now has arrived for the attainment of swaraj". When the goal was within reach, just four weeks ahead, where was the necessity to discuss the question of means and methods?

On looking into the speeches at Jharia, one immediately feels how the situation had radicalised within one year of the founding session of October 1920 and had gone several steps ahead of the Bombay session.

The leadership of the National Congress and particularly Mahatma Gandhi had refused to define what is meant by swaraj: he thought thereby he could win the support of all classes in the country and make the Congress the national front of the freedom movement. Everybody could define swaraj the way he or his class wanted.

At the Jharia session, however, the workers and some of the leaders put their own content in swaraj and put their own definition on it.

Dewan Chamanlal, the mover of the resolution on swaraj, said:

"It was they—the European and Indian capitalists, who did not want swaraj because they knew that swaraj was not for them... the swaraj that they would have was not to be swaraj of the capitalists but the swaraj of the workers."¹²

Dewan Chamanlal had not said anything of the kind at the Bombay session.

K. C. Chaudhury of Bengal spoke in Hindi and said:

"To remove forced labour and beggary they wanted swaraj. It was to prevent their employers from calling the help of the police and military, who are at their beck and

call every now and then to suppress and break strikes, they wanted swaraj. They wanted the railways to be nationalised, they wanted the nationalisation of mines, municipalisation of tramways, gas and electric works and it was for that they wanted swaraj.”¹³

Mahammed Daud, Bar-at-law and president of the Seamen’s Union, wanted swaraj to enforce the recommendations of the International Labour Conference.¹⁴

The report of the proceedings says:

“Then a young daughter of Mr Ramjash Agarwalla, a girl of nine, recited a highly patriotic poem which kept the house spellbound for several minutes.”¹⁵

Then a speaker, K. P. Sinha got up and said:

“The dawn of swaraj is in sight and you will have it within 31st December.”¹⁶

The workers in all their innocence as well as strength believed all this. When the speakers spoke that the capitalists did not want swaraj, they had sitting before them the most prominent colliery owner of Bihar, as the chairman of the reception committee. In Bombay too they had many Swarajist capitalists on the reception committee. But then the workers did not think this talk to be false, because, in their minds, the emblem of capitalism were men like Tatas and the British gentry who did not want swaraj.

What was the AITUC’s politics at Jharia as enunciated by President J. Baptista, a genuine champion of the workers in Bombay? In his presidential address, he said:

“Our political policy must steer clear of the extreme individualism and bolshevism and follow the golden mean of fabian socialism.”¹⁷

Lala Lajpat Rai at Bombay was more advanced than fabian socialism.

At the same time, as the question of the relationship of

13. pp. 115-16.

15. p. 116.

14. p. 117.

16. Ibid.

17. p. 148.

the working-class movement to politics cropped up again, President Baptista said:

“The fact is that at the bottom of the objection (to politics) was the fear that the masses would wrench from the classes the political power by combination. This fear must be greater in India where power is in the hands of foreigners. Besides direct action even for political ends has been sanctioned by British labour. It stopped Churchill’s machinations against Russia. The bureaucracy may, therefore, fear that a general strike may be the shortest way to swaraj, but this is no reason for the Trade Union Congress to boycott politics. We are quite justified in ignoring the objection.”¹⁸

To put the trade unions on the political rails was not a difficult task. The working class as a part of the Indian people was fully with the slogans of national freedom, in whatever form they were put by the Indian National Congress or, in its absence, by the spontaneous actions of the working class, the peasantry and the intelligentsia. Therefore the first session at Bombay in 1920 and more particularly the second one at Jharia in 1921 were dominated by political emotions and slogans of freedom and democratic rights. *The politicalisation of the trade-union movement and the AITUC took place at its very foundation.* Those who say that politics was brought into the trade unions and the AITUC by the communists are not stating correct history. If those of us, young men, who were there had any big say, the resolution on swaraj would not have waited till Jharia and Bombay would not have been left without the stamp of the key political resolution of that time. Politics was brought into the AITUC from its very inception by the National Congress and they did well to bring it in. They started regretting it only when the working class came of age and began to put forward its own class politics against that of the bourgeoisie.

IX

The spirit of the times and the ideas that moved it are not seen only in the presidential speeches or only in the political questions. There was a telegram from "the socialists of Madras", which the British trade-union delegate Col Wedgwood mentions as having "struck him much". "It stated that *what the Indian workers demanded was industrial control and land nationalisation and not any palliatives as profit-sharing and increase in wages.*" Col Wedgwood called it "the impracticable politics of the labour extremists".¹⁹

The real spirit of the first session was expressed in the speeches of the rank-and-file workers, some of which are preserved in these records. One such notable speech was that of Tej Singh employed in the steel works of Jamshedpur which had been on strike at this time.

Referring to the Jamshedpur strike, he said, the strike lasted for twentytwo days and the strikers throughout behaved peacefully. And yet, he added, what was the result? Producing on the platform a workman who had lost one arm, the speaker said, that was the result. He continued:

"It was absolutely untrue to say that the strikers were attacked because they wanted to wreck a railway line in the works. They had wanted to do nothing of the kind. The firing resulted in twentytwo men being wounded and six killed. He deeply regretted that such a thing should have happened in the works which bore the honoured name of Jamshedji Tata, a name which the workers in Jamshedpur cherished with deep affection and respect. He regretted that the directors had done nothing beyond expressing mere lip-sympathy with their men.

"He was ashamed that he had to speak against his employer whose salt he ate, but he looked upon it as an imperative duty to speak out, principally because these things

had happened in an Indian company and that too a company which bore a name which was universally respected in India. It might be that he would be dismissed for having thus spoken out, but he was not afraid to that. He had done his duty.”²⁰

Though this report belongs to 1920, it could as well read for the 1958 or 1968 strike at Jamshedpur. The same tradition travelled from father to son in the big owner’s family and was resisted by the same tradition of struggle and sacrifice in the workers’ family. If Tej Singh were alive today, he would not speak of the “salt he ate” but would speak of the blows he gave to the mightiest company of India.

This was not the only speech on strikes. When the session was meeting, there were big strikes throughout the country. Bombay city itself was in the grip of the biggest strike wave after the end of the war. The working class was marching on the offensive both on the political and economic front. On the economic front, the demands everywhere were almost common—dearness allowance against rise in prices, bonus from the huge profits of the war and postwar period, limitation on hours of work which still ran to twelve to fourteen hours, protection against arbitrary dismissals and physical assaults and beatings of men and women, forfeiture of wages, and for general humane treatment. The social-economic demands need not be listed here in full, because in conditions in those times there were no norms for anything, not even physical protection for men, women or children from the assaults of the employers’ agents. It was a jungle law of the ferocious men of capital, and so the single demand was—treat us as humans.

The record in this volume speaks with indignation of the *indentured labour system* and the demand for its abolition. This system under which lakhs of labourers were sent practically into slavery (with so-called “agreements of long-

term service") to the tea plantations in India and sugar plantations in British colonies came in for heavy attacks. The speech of Mrs Deep Narain Singh reveals the position in all its cruelty. The whole of the working class and people in India were in revolt against the continuance of this slave labour. The session passed a resolution demanding the abolition of indentured labour system. In practice it was ended soon, though legally it continued on the statute book for some time.

The session adopted resolutions supporting the big textile strike in Bombay as also the strikes in tramways, post and telegraph and gas works.

The speech of J. B. Miller was remarkably bold in this connection. He was ready for calling a sympathetic general strike in Lahore, Madras and other places in support of the Bombay strike.

Mr Miller was not throwing out empty phrases, when he said:

"If the tram and other strikes were not brought to an end, he would appeal to his Lahore friends to close all karkhanas in Lahore and would make a similar appeal to Madras."^{20a}

Mr Miller and Mr M. A. Khan, who also was at the conference, were powerful leaders of workers in Punjab and particularly the railway workers on the North Western and UP railway system. In those days it was a peculiar feature that the railway workers and their strikes were keeping pace with the militant actions of other industries. Hence the courage and confidence with which Miller spoke and that too in the so-called "backward" period of 1920.

X

The founding session had the unique fortune to be greeted by thousands of workers from all factories in Bombay. In the whole country there was not a single industry which had not burst into struggles. Alongside this the horror of firings on the tea-plantation workers and the oppression

of the indentured labourers in Fiji filled the whole atmosphere. No better surroundings could have been found for laying the foundation of the AITUC.

The Jharia session also met in the atmosphere of total hartals and general strikes that raged throughout the country which had been called by the leadership of the National Congress to protest against the visit of the Prince of Wales. At Jharia all the coal mines were closed down by the workers to enable them to attend the rallies of the session. In the year of 1921, when the workers had no organisation to lead them, this action of the miners was so gigantic, so frightening to the government and so inspiring to the movement and the leadership that the British government called in the army to be on the alert.

Thus the first salvoes of the AITUC's first two sessions in the revolutionary period of 1919-22 had heralded a new stage of Indian history and brought into the battlefield new forces of the national-liberation movement and the Indian revolution.

The founding of the AITUC in 1920 was an event of great historical importance. It ushered in an organisation of the workers on a class basis. It proposed to provide a central direction to that basic new organisational unity of the workers in their various places of work—called the trade unions. And appearing at a time when the national-liberation movement had begun its upsurge, it became its powerful asset by contributing new weapons of struggle in the form of the *general strike*. And, above all, it brought forward to the attention of Indian society the vision of a new social order without classes and without exploitation, embodied in the great concept of socialism.

Now, new tools, the new machines which put men to collective labour had appeared in history. The old organisation of family, caste and religion with its hereditary individual labour and tools was irrelevant to the new factory, the collectively-operated machine and the wages system. Here family, caste and religion became irrelevant

as basic factors of organisation of social and political life. We had to have a new organisation of the collective working man at his place of work called the *trade union*. A new man and new organisation had appeared in Indian society. The founding of the AITUC heralded this new phenomenon. Hence the president of the founding session began his address in the most fitting way, saying:

“It is a unique occasion, the first of its kind even in the history of this ancient country of ours. In her long history extending over thousands of years, India has surely seen many a great gathering in which parts of this vast sub-continent and all classes of its population were represented, gatherings at which were discussed and settled important and nice questions of religion, philosophy, grammar, law and politics, gatherings in which foreign scholars, and foreign ambassadors and foreign diplomats took part. But history records no instance of an assemblage that was convened solely to consider the interests and welfare of workers, not only of this city or that, not of this province or that, but of Bharatvarsha as a whole... We are living in an age quite different from anything that the world has seen or known before. That being so, the problems that face and the questions that confront us are, from the very nature of things, of a different kind from those that confronted our immediate and remote ancestors. This fact, whether we like it or not, has to be recognised.”²¹

21. pp. 23-24.

2. Origins of the AITUC

I

In this part we shall deal with some of the organisational questions of the AITUC—such as: Why was it founded in 1920; why not earlier? Who were the persons that took the lead? Who were the organisers?

These questions have been raised by those who have written about the history of the AITUC and some of those who participated in its foundation. I am raising these questions over again here because much of what has been said does not reveal the true aspects of the matter. Even the question of the origin has been so dealt with that it does not reveal the truth.

Most of the writers say that the AITUC was founded in order to represent Indian labour on the International Labour Organisation which had been brought into existence under the auspices of the League of Nations at the end of the first world war. It was a tripartite body of representatives of government, employers' organisations and labour organisations in each country. The nomination of the employers' and labour representatives was to be done by government in consultation with their organisations whom the government thought to be representative.

In India there were employers' organisations, but no central organisation of workers as such existed. And so the government chose "labour" representative of its own choice. This arbitrary method was resented in the trade-union movement. Though there was no central trade-union organisation as such, there were trade unions in various industries and trades and even federations.

The government of India, knowing the weakness of its position and for tactical reasons, wanted to appoint Lokmanya Tilak for the Washington Labour Conference, when he was in Britain, taking note of the opinion of workers' meetings in Bombay, before the AITUC was founded. But government made him only an adviser, i.e. a subordinate to the government-nominated chief delegate. Hence, Tilak refused to go to Washington. He explained his position at a 10,000-strong workers' meeting held on 29 November 1919 behind the Empress mills.²² It was soon after this that the AITUC was called in 1920 to provide a central trade-union body to represent India at the ILO.

This presentation of the matter is not correct. Even the note which Dewan Chamanlal wrote as a summing up after the inaugural session²³ says: "The workers were ready for a mass movement towards organisation. But the idea had not been spread forcefully among them... The time had surely come for an all-India movement and the opportunity was afforded by a comparatively trifling incident." And that "trifling incident" was the nomination by the government of India of N. M. Joshi to the Commission of Inquiry and the ILO at Geneva.

Dewan Chamanlal calls the question of ILO representation as trifling. The real reason which he mentions is that the mass movement was ready to call forth a central trade-

22. *Source Material for History of the Freedom Movement in India*, collected from Bombay Government Records, Vol. II, 1885-1920, Government of Bombay, 1958, pp. 317-18. Hereafter referred to as *Source Material II*.

23. *Infra*, p. 3-8.

union organisation of the workers and so the AITUC was founded.

II

In this note Chamanlal makes the statement that "Until the month of June 1920 labour was generally in an unorganised state in India. There were a few unions in existence. But generally speaking there was no mass movement towards organisation amongst the workers." This was not due to the workers' ignorance or any innate inability. Then what was it due to? Well, the idea was not forcefully put to them so far and so Chamanlal came on the scene and did it!

How did he start? He says the matter of the workers representative to the ILO was taken up by Bombay workers, who held a meeting in Parel on 7 July 1920 and passed a resolution demanding a delegate of their choice and denouncing the nomination of N. M. Joshi to the Commission of Inquiry. It further said "That this meeting resolves to hold an All-India Trade Union Congress in Bombay and elects Lala Lajpat Rai as the first president."²⁴

It all looks so nice and neat. Until June 1920 labour in India was generally unorganised. In July, workers meet in Parel (Bombay) to denounce the government on the ILO nomination and decide to establish the AITUC. And they also elect Lala Lajpat Rai as the first president.

The facts as stated are true. There was a meeting of workers in Parel and a resolution was passed. It seems the resolution ended the unorganised state of labour in India, as it existed till June 1920, as per Chamanlal!

The note was not expected, perhaps, to go into the question as to how such an event on such a grand scale came to happen. That it was an unprecedented thing is shown by the thousands of workers and hundreds of delegates that came

for the session. The note itself says that the AITUC at the first session in October itself had 800 delegates representing "no less than 500,000 workers with sixty unions who affiliated and forty who sympathised". Actually from 1919 onwards tens of thousands of workers were going on strikes, not in short spurts but prolonged ones. Hundreds of organisations, as unions or action committees in one form or another, were functioning throughout the country.

To coordinate the rising trade-union and strike movement, which was also a part of the political and economic crisis, the leaders in the political and trade-union fields were planning an organised movement. The growing crisis in the National Congress leadership on the question of tactics and forms of the national-liberation struggle were being reflected not only in the Congress organisation. They were taking shape in the working-class front, in the trade unions, in the strikes and even on the question of the formation of the AITUC. The Parel workers' meeting was only one move in these developments.

Chamanlal says that the session was fixed for 22 August. But it had to be postponed "owing to insufficiency of time". Here also he is not stating the facts correctly. Why he is so evasive will become clear later on as we proceed with this narrative.

Anybody can see that if the 7 July meeting was the startingpoint, certainly it could not have been expected to hold an all-India session of such a nature within six weeks. Which means that the July meeting was not the starting-point. Things had been planned long before by the real people concerned and hence 22 August was fixed. The July meeting only gave mass sanction for the idea. But the date had to be postponed because Lokmanya Tilak, the moving spirit of the idea and the real inspirer and organiser of the working class, died on 1 August 1920.

Dewan Chamanlal had gone to meet Tilak on 20 July in Bombay, in the Sardar Griha, a Bombay hotel, where he was staying. He discussed the AITUC questions with him.

Tilak was feeling unwell and had fever. Thinking that a drive might give him relief, Chamanlal took Tilak for a drive in his car, with the hood open. The exposure seems to have worsened Tilak's illness; he developed pneumonia and died on 1 August 1920. This is what N. C. Kelkar, one of the closest disciples of Tilak, writes in his Marathi biographical volumes on Tilak.

The death of Tilak, which was the most tragic loss to the nation, took place in the midst of the rapidly-developing anti-imperialist movement in India in the period following the first world war. The leadership of the National Congress itself was in a crisis on the question of tactics of the struggle and definition of goals. And every section of the people was mobilising for the decision, which was to have been taken at the special session of the National Congress scheduled to meet in September 1920 at Calcutta.

The programme of anti-imperialist action put forward by Gandhi in the form of noncooperation (NCO) was being opposed by almost all the well-known leaders of the Congress including Motilal Nehru, C. R. Das and others. Gandhi was consulting with Tilak about his opinion, as without his support no resolution could have been passed at Calcutta. Tilak was not opposed to the tactical line of non-cooperation as such because he himself had advanced it in the 1905-8 period. But his approach did not coincide with all the points of Gandhi's ideology and approach. Tilak wanted to take the Congress leadership with him while Gandhi was prepared to throw them all out and go his own way if necessary. Tilak was also cautious about the projected time-table that Gandhi had in his mind about swaraj in one year, etc. which Tilak thought utopian. While the political arguments were reaching fever heat, all sections of people had sprung up into wide and intensive political and organisational activity. Meetings and conferences of students and workers were springing up everywhere and so the AITUC was timed to meet on 22 August, before the decisive September Congress.

But Tilak died and the AITUC session was postponed to October 1920. The September Calcutta Congress met in its special session and adopted the noncooperation resolution but the act of putting momentous finality on it was left to the regular December session to be held in Nagpur, in view of the strong opposition it had in Calcutta. In the absence of Tilak, it would have been impossible to put the AITUC on to the swaraj line, as a background to September. And we have seen earlier this is just what happened. There was no swaraj resolution at the Bombay session in October 1920. But it was there in December 1921 at the Jharia session.

The founding of the AITUC, the direction of its objectives and its organisational forces, its timing and composition were not just chance events. They had a political-economic logic of the movement of the working class and the national-liberation movement, which at this time was marching with revolutionary speed and tempo. And the holding of the AITUC session was a necessary link in this chain.

The links of the chain were not coming together spontaneously or just by the chance insult of an ILO nomination or the enthusiasm of two young barristers landing in a Parel workers' meeting. The origins of militant working-class actions and a conscious preaching of trade unionism arose in the Indian working class and particularly in Bombay long ago and had its most militant political action and expression in the years 1905-8. In fact, if the terrorism of the Curzon regime had not suppressed the movements of that period, and if the National Congress had not suffered a split at Surat in December 1907, the AITUC would have been born at some point in time in the economic crisis and the intense political and economic struggles and strike battles of the period of 1905-8.

III

It is necessary to refer here to this period of our history in order to get a better understanding of the historical process that put the Indian working class alongside the other classes on to the field of revolutionary anti-imperialist struggles and their own class-battles. It is also necessary to see what key role Tilak played in these developments, whose threads he later on resumed in the postwar strike struggles and the founding of the AITUC in 1920.

The despoliation of India by the British imperialist conquerors is well-known. How their economic and political policies led to famines and plagues, to the death of millions of Indians is told by many historians, British as well as Indian. Alongside this work of destruction of a people, they were also sowing the seeds of a new social order, not because of any progressive purpose on the part of the conquerors despite Macaulay's shallow boasting but unconsciously and because of the sordid motives of using Indian labour and Indian raw material for manufacture yielding high profit rates for British capital. Thus the cotton textile and jute industries were established, tea gardens and coffee plantations, coal mines, railways and telegraphs, and alongside them engineering works grew up. Along with the new economy, the capitalist economy, its inevitable product, the working class, was being born in India, a class which had never existed in Indian history.

It took the working class in India a long time to realise its position and its power. It did not know even its wage-value, until the plague in Bombay told it that it was more valuable than what it was paid and that capital could not run without its 'hands'.

We do not know much about how and when the first strikes took place. There is a mention of the Budge-Budge Jute Mill strike in 1873. There were some in 1875 in Bombay textiles. There was an attempt at some organisation to present a memorandum to the Factory Commission appoint-

ed by the British government in 1890 and the solitary name of Lokhande as its organiser survives. The working class was too downtrodden, exploited, awed and crushed by the infernal machine of oppression of the British owners and their Indian partners to fight prolonged battles and leave its mark on history, which it began to do by 1905.

At the time of the first war of independence of 1857, there were already a few mills and factories and a few miles of railways coming up. But neither the Indian revolutionary army of 1857 nor the British had any use for them except that we smashed the few telegraph wires that worked as the evil carriers of the unholy commands of the foreign enemy and 'satan', as our soldiers called them.

As everyone knows, our defeat in 1857 did not end the fighting. The tribal areas continued to resist the disarming campaign of the British. Bhils and Berads were captured and hanged in the bazars of Baroda town to sow terror and breed loyalty to the British crown. Tribal villages were burned and razed to the ground. Their women, particularly, were herded into concentration camps. And the hatred inspired by the fighting mother of the Bhil leader, Bhagoji Naik, can be read in the pages of British dispatches. There are many such heroic deeds of resistance in all parts of India. And the last, perhaps retreating, fight was given by the Phadke rebellion in the Deccan, led by a "mere clerk" of that name in the government office in Poona city. He raised the standard of independence, issued a manifesto, assumed the title of Shivaji the Second and, gathering a few Pathan and tribal gunmen, harassed the British until he was captured, tried and transported to the Andamans in 1880. Many British historians called it a peasant rebellion arising from the wrong land policy of the British government.²⁵

That rebellion set the British thinking of finding some

25. See London *Times* and other papers quoted in the Marathi book *Life of Vasudeo Balwant Phadke* by V. S. Joshi.

forum allowing the newly-rising political forces of Indian nationalism a means of expression. As a result, the Indian National Congress came into being, with its centre in Bombay. The question was—would the young generation of the intelligentsia, which was the inspiring and leading force of nationalism, agree to abide by constitutional goals, means and methods? Will the rising Indian bourgeoisie allow the British to continue to rule and yet find roads for its growth and improvement of the conditions of the people, consistently with the existence of the British empire and British profits? The thing was obviously impossible and the Indian intelligentsia, the organiser and inspirer of the freedom movement, made no secret of it. They used all forms and tactics of struggle and their common aim was not hidden.

The movement was taking shape under two different schools of thought. One school held the view that armed resistance must be continued and organised in a new way. The Phadke rebellion form or the tribal revolt form was too narrow-based and devoid of clear ideology and technically too weak to meet the needs of the new period.

This school of thought was not ready to wait for the politicalisation of the masses. Some of them assumed that it was not necessary. Some assumed that it existed in the very conditions of their life of misery and oppression and it required only a big jolt or spark of heroic armed action through secret organisations to put the masses into rebellion—something like a second 1857 minus the emperor. They wanted conspiratorial uprisings or individual assassination of the ruling personages. This in their opinion would serve two purposes. If the conspiratorial network was wide and sure enough, they would capture a few centres and kindle a nationwide insurrection or it may bring about vast upheavals by the masses which might even move the Indians in the army to mutiny and capture power.

The second school of thought held that armed resistance without mass political consciousness and participation

would be doomed to failure. Hence the preparations for both must be done—first, mass politicalisation through open political campaigns and other activities, such as through political newspapers, education, protest movements, boycotts, swadeshi, forms of noncooperation and so on. And, second, alongside this, preparations for training youth and student volunteers, including school boys, under the garb of celebrations in honour of historical personages or of pujas, combined with secret collection of arms, training in shooting, etc. When the masses would be moved into political action, these detachments would carry out the armed uprising and struggle for power.

Apart from these two there was the third school of the national movement, the liberal bourgeoisie. It was content to carry on with its demand for social reforms, eradicating the caste system, asking for concessions and reforms and finally attain dominion status through constitutional processes. They formed the major part of the National Congress and the strong growing group of Indian millowners, bankers and big capitalists backed this wing. The princes and landholders as a whole were loyal to the crown to the core.

Who were the persons who could be identified broadly with these various "Roads to Freedom"?

IV

After the liquidation of the Phadke rebellion things looked quiet for a time, except in certain tribal areas like the Santals and others or isolated peasant riots against moneylenders and landlords. Things moved a little round Bombay, Calcutta, Lahore and Madras, in working-class areas.

The famines which gripped the country and the plague in Bombay and Maharashtra brought matters to a head.

As everyone should know, there were eighteen famines in India between 1876 and 1900 and according to official

records, an estimated total of 15,000,000 people died.²⁶

While the famines sent the ruined peasantry to the towns, to Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Ahmedabad, etc., or in indentured slave-labour gangs to the British plantations and colonies like Fiji, Kenya, Uganda, Mauritius, Guiana and so on, the towns themselves were gripped by the plague epidemics. The famine-stricken were rushing into the cities, while the plague-stricken were running away from the cities. The British official Edwards in his "Rise of Bombay" notes:

"Disastrous famines in Gujarath and Deccan districts in 1899 and 1900 contributed to a flow of people into Bombay at the same time that the residents were fleeing from the city."

Where to? Death faced them on all sides. What 'peaceful' strangulation and murder of the Indian people—what crime!

It was during this period that the abovementioned revolutionary schools with two tactics or roads to freedom began to take definite shape. As can be seen, the two were not separate from each other in objectives, but differed on immediate tactics and forms of struggle. A section in the first school was composed of men who served in the different native states in responsible positions as either civil servants or in the small detachments of ill-equipped sepoy of the princely houses. They had hopes that they could put a new sense of patriotism in some of the native princes and make them the focal points of insurrection and a new edition of 1857. Some significant work was begun on this line in Baroda, Indore and Kolhapur raj. How the tactics on the princes' front did not lead to much except for some small but good gains is a different story which can be told elsewhere.

Some groups of this armed action school built secret so-

26. W. S. Lilly, *India and Its Problems*, by R. Palme Dutt, *India Today*, Bombay, 1947, p. 106.

cieties like the Anushilan in Bengal. Some went about with their separate groups, like that of Chapekar brothers, Savarkar brothers and others, planning individual annihilation of the enemy.

Enraged by the atrocities of the British soldiers in the plague epidemic in Poona city, Chapekar shot two British officers in charge of plague operations named Mr Rand and Lt. Ayerst in Poona city on 22 June 1897 which was the sixtieth anniversary of Queen Victoria's coronation. The British called them jubilee night murders. The atrocities committed by the British soldiers were the immediate cause of this upheaval. It is said the angry and wailing cries of the women of Poona city, at the public fountains, where they went for water supplies, moved Chapekar to do that avenging act.

From then on began the campaign of individual annihilation in a planned manner and with a manifesto, philosophy and forces different from Phadke's. We cannot go into the daring deeds of these groups and individuals. However philosophically and tactically wrong they might have been their heroism was appreciated by the people and due homage was paid to them. Chapekar, Kanhere, Savarkar, Madanlal Dhingra, Khudiram Bose, and later on Ramprasad Bismil, Bhagat Singh, Chandrasekhar Azad or the heroes of the Chittagong armoury raid—are all honoured names of this school of armed action in India's history of the freedom movement.

But it is also to be noted that despite their immense sacrifices, none of their actions sparked off any uprising or even sympathetic mass action anywhere in India in this or subsequent period.

One may ask—did they expect any mass response? They did. It may be useful to put before our reader an extract from Savarkar's pamphlet published in London entitled *Bande Mataram* and smuggled into India in 1909. In one place, the pamphlet said:

“Terrorise the officials, English and Indian, and the col-

lapse of the whole machinery of oppression is not very far. The persistent execution of this policy that has been so gloriously inaugurated by Khudiram Basu, Kanai Lal Dutta and other martyrs will soon cripple the British government in India. This campaign of separate assassinations is the best conceivable method of paralysing the bureaucracy and of arousing the people. The initial stage of the revolution is marked by the policy of separate assassinations.”²⁷

Digressing from the period under our study, one may remark here that this statement of policy exactly reads like that of the modern naxalites of the Charu Muzumdar school, except that Savarkar had not the advantage to add the letters “Marxist-Leninist” to his party nor the name of Mao Tse-tung to quote. Neither preindependence revolutionary nationalism of Savarkar based on individual assassination, even of the most-hated bureaucrats, roused the people to insurrectionary action, nor did the Maoist “proletarianism” of the CPML arouse the exploited masses to any mass insurrectionary upheaval for liberation and socialism in independent India. Both before and after independence, these forms and tactics have proved historically incorrect despite the amount of courage and sacrifice shown in their execution in both periods.

One interesting fact should also be recorded here. We have seen in the earlier section, how the Russian October Revolution and bolshevism found attraction and praise in the first session of the AITUC. It seems, however, that even before the bolsheviks, the Russian anarchists and nihilists also had attracted the Indian revolutionaries. When Ganesh Savarkar was arrested in 1909, he had a book with him entitled *How the Russians Organise a Revolution*. It was on Russian secret societies and assassinations. He had also a copy of Forst’s *Secret Societies of the European Revolution, 1776-1876* in which the Russian nihilists’ secret society organisation was described. Some political writers

27. Seditious Committee Report, 1918, p. 11.

wrote about how bombs had forced the tsar to give the Duma to the people. Everyone knows the historical fact that Lenin's brother followed this road and was hanged for the assassination of the tsar. Lenin argued against that path and he succeeded with history.

V

Now we shall come to the second school of the Indian revolutionaries. How was it evolving and through whom? The theoretician and organiser of this school was Tilak. He was the only person who wanted to combine all forms of mass struggle including preparation for an armed uprising. And he first gave the working class and the trade unions a political role in furthering the movement of the anti-imperialist national-liberation struggle, along with the peasantry and the intelligentsia.

Though it is not necessary to give the biographical sketch of Tilak, yet the relevant landmarks which reveal his main direction of political thinking and work have to be indicated. As a young man, he is reported to have attended some of the secret meetings of the rebel Phadke, in which he tried to recruit followers and give his programme. Tilak did not go that road. He held before him first the task of establishing an educational institution wherein selfless and upright teachers would give young students the usual courses along with feelings of patriotism and self-respect. The teachers were supposed to work and live like jesuits, as some put it. The institutions were built but they went the way of all flesh and Tilak left his friends for the other job of education and propaganda.

That was to start a weekly paper which would go to the masses and tell them of politics and economics, their own life's problems and the solutions. One paper, *Kesari*, was to be in Marathi and the other *Mahratta* was to be in English for all-India consumption. *Kesari* soon became the political mobiliser of the revolutionary masses. Every

village in Maharashtra read it collectively and it became a real anti-imperialist mass organ.

Then he started the Shivaji and Ganesh celebrations, the rebel politics of one being covered up by the religious garb of the other. Yet it is a well-known fact that the Shivaji and Ganesh celebrations soon turned into political gatherings and vehicles for young men and even school boys to spread sentiments of patriotism and collective social service. The government and the loyalists attacked them as a cover and ruse for "seditious" and anti-British actions.

Just about the time of the Rand murder, a meeting about Shivaji Utsav took place in which Tilak and others spoke. In the speeches there were references to Shivaji's killing of Afzalkhan. Replying to critics of Shivaji on this question, Tilak said that Shivaji was justified in doing what he did and that "he cannot be judged in terms of the penal code". A report of this appeared in *Kesari*. The government took this and other material in the paper as justifying the Rand murder. Tilak was arrested, tried and sentenced to two years' imprisonment in 1897 at the very height of the plague, famine and misery of the millions, who were not yet conscious enough to know the roots of the evil and how and where to fight it.

It is necessary to mention here that the reportage article in *Kesari* was not the real nor the only reason for Tilak's arrest. A report by the ICS commissioner of the central division of Bombay on the riots in Thana district in 1897-98 says that the Kolis and Christians raised a riot against plague measures and "burnt down every plague hospital in their parishes as soon as it was erected". The report further notes:

"Meanwhile Bal Gangadhar Tilak, through the agency of a seditious Sabha in Umbergaon, was flooding the country with proclamations against payment of land revenue and urging resistance to any attempt to collect it."

This was highly dangerous for government because "in the midst of these troubles there was a partial mutiny

among the police and one of them deserted with a drill book and after arming and drilling a small number of confederates went to the Ghats to raise the hill Kolis for an attack on Matheran²⁸ which was a British hill station on the road to Poona.

The Rand incident did not tame Tilak nor make him change his line—educate, organise and rouse the masses and, in its time, lead them to insurrection. The Rand murder may be wrong tactics but he would not desert the terrorist-revolutionaries. In fact he managed to give medical and legal aid to them. So in 1902 after his release and a little look around, he put his trusted lieutenant K. P. Khadilkar to study the art of guerilla warfare, not of Shivaji's times but of modern times. How was this to be done? By studying the Boer war, which was raging in South Africa at that very time. The whole study was put before the people through *Kesari* in the form of nine articles from 17 June to 26 August 1902 by Khadilkar. They make valuable reading even today. In those days you had only to substitute the word 'Indians' or 'Marathas' for Boers regarding the question of capturing arms from the enemy, positions of the battle, the nature of the rifle, the main weapon of such war at that period, and the question of morale, ideology and arms, etc. The article on the conclusions to be drawn on theory and practice of guerilla war could not be published, because they were so explosive and explicit, so blatantly applicable to India that to have published them would have led to the suppression of the press and the imprisonment of the editors. The article was written, but withheld for legal consultation. Unfortunately in the process the manuscript was lost.

After studying the Boer war tactics Tilak thought of arms supplies, production and training. So he sent Khadilkar to the neighbouring independent state of Nepal to establish an underground arms factory. An agent of the

28. *Source Material*, Vol. II, p. 638.

Krupps in Germany had agreed to supply the machines for it. Khadilkar started a tiles factory as a cover, but the machines never arrived. And very soon, one of the accomplices working there revealed the scheme to someone, which led to the betrayal of the plans. The arms factory project misfired. Some feelers seem to have been put to the Russians through the tsarist consulate in India.

Why the factory? Tilak was convinced the masses were becoming more and more discontented and the middle classes in the Congress were turning to the left while the leadership was in no mood to go into political action. So if the movement burst forth, the plan of armed action in consonance with mass action must be ready. Otherwise there is no reason why a person like Tilak, who is generally described as a "constitutionalist Home Ruler" and not a very big revolutionary compared to the renowned terrorists or the post-1920 Gandhian resisters, should plan an arms factory in Nepal within months of his release from prison for 'defence' of the rack-rented peasantry and the terrorist Chapekars, who killed two high-placed British officers. The biographers of Tilak have no explanation and they are just confounded. But they go on asserting that Tilak had no plans or ideas of armed insurrection. At best he was a militant but pious Hindu Home Ruler—nothing compared to the Great Mahatma, who openly called for the overthrow of the satanic state but also condemned the terrorist revolutionaries.

The arms factory and the study of guerilla war and its tactics under the cover of the Boers were not being done for intellectual luxury nor did they fit into journalistic practice as they ran several weeks in succession and were in places so detailed as to make one think that they were written for someone's training.

VI

Then began the economic crisis and the attacks of the imperialists to control the growing discontent and disrupt the rising revolutionary ideology and organisation. The proposal to partition Bengal announced from Simla on 19 July 1905 provided the spark and the conflagration began.

The partition of Bengal was a measure to disrupt the growing national unity of the Bengali people, irrespective of religion. East Bengal which was predominantly Muslim was to be separated from West Bengal which was predominantly Hindu. But the East Bengal peasantry was radical-minded and, apart from Calcutta in the west, many of the Bengal revolutionaries hailed from Dacca in the east. Right up to the partition of India in 1947, Dacca was a storm-centre of the revolutionaries in company with Calcutta.

The partition of 1905 was calculated to put the Hindus and Muslims at loggerheads. But it worked the other way.

To fight the partition became a national issue. The movement also gave birth to more slogans—boycott of foreign goods, swadeshi, national education and finally swaraj. The song of *Bande Mataram* was taken up from the novel of Bankimchandra on the Sanyasi rebellion. And bombs began to be prepared by the underground revolutionary groups for individual annihilation of the enemy.

The political crisis received some emotional nourishment from the news of the Russo-Japanese war. The victories of an 'Asian' nation against a European nation pleased the Indians as a suppressed Asian nation. The political crisis fed by boycott and swadeshi slogans came to the relief of Indian industry particularly textiles and the bourgeoisie, which was harassed by discriminatory duties by the British to protect Manchester barons, was pleased by the boycott slogan. At the same time the compradors feared Tilak and the masses and their revolutionary upsurge for these

slogans which in their essence meant independence and swaraj. The people joined in the boycott and swadeshi campaign in defence of their country, their right and self-respect. They did not bother just now as to who made the profits from it and what the same bourgeoisie did to its own working class.

At this very period a big strike wave broke out. The first strike wave came up due to the owners' lengthening of the working day beyond the "sunset and sunrise" limits, i.e. beyond twelve to fourteen hours a day, depending on the season. In 1904, electric lights were introduced in the mills and that nullified the limits set by the sunlight rule, with the result that the working day was pushed to and even beyond fifteen hours a day. At the same time, under the plea of depression some mills worked short hours and some introduced double shifts. The *Indian Textile Journal* of July-October 1905 says about Bombay:

"The disorderly situation finally culminated in October 1905 in riots. Mobs of operative roamed from one late-working mill to another calling out workers, throwing rocks, breaking windows and, in one case, destroying the attendance sheets and records kept by the time-keeper."

Added to the increase in hours of work was the fact that the cost of living was continuously rising in the cities, one of the reasons being the export of rice and wheat to England.

Tilak at this time is found taking politics to the working class by holding meetings and writing in his papers.

A government report of 1906 says that in the meetings connected with Ganapati celebrations in Poona,

"Tilak urged the necessity of having unions and organisations throughout the country similar to those in England, America and Russia to represent the grievances of the public, and observed that the recent strike of postal peons in Bombay proved futile for want of a union. The leaders of the country, he said, had succeeded in making the present state of affairs known to all and it was now their duty to

stimulate matters by putting forward suggestions for the formation of unions with a view to approach government in a more systematic way.”²⁹

The Poona paper *Dnan Prakash* of 18 December 1907 reports a meeting in Bombay on 15 December, addressed by Tilak on the boycott and other matters. The report says: “The meeting which was attended by about 5,000 persons, mostly millhands, was presided over by Tilak.”

The movement of the workers and the strike struggle were not limited only to Bombay or only to the textile workers. It affected the whole country and all sections of workers. A strong plea for formation of trade unions everywhere was being made by Tilak and others through the papers and meetings.

The anti-imperialist liberation movement, with the slogans of boycott, swadeshi and swaraj, caused big upheavals in Bengal, Punjab and Madras, where it was led by Bepinchandra Pal, Lajpat Rai and Chidambaram Pillai. It took the form of peasant uprisings, strikes of workers, and student actions.

One of the most striking things in this period was that the European workers also went on strike. The railways were the key points of the strike struggle and the European loco drivers' strike on the East Bengal and North India railways in November 1907 precipitated events.

The European drivers and Anglo-Indian workers were employed by the railway companies (railways belonged to private British companies in those days) thinking that it would not be safe to entrust this key job in a vital industry to Indian workers, who being prone to political influences might go on strike. But contrary to their expectations, the European workers also struck work on questions of pay and allowances, duty hours, housing, etc.

This was a serious jolt to the government as government and to the prestige of the European despots as Europeans, when a section of their own 'ruling caste' went on strike.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 218.

The strike of the European drivers was not in any way political. It was due partly to their own grievances and partly to the strike wave in England, their home country, where their own brother workers were also in the grip of a strike wave. But the British railwaymen's union in England did not approve of the Indian strike.

In India, the strikes were being denounced as politically motivated and as part of the tactics of the extremists in the camp of the Congress led by Tilak to prepare for a revolutionary uprising. This frightened that section of the bourgeoisie which was tied up with the British and their political wing in the Congress forced a split at Surat in December 1907 and broke up the unity of the only organ and party of the national movement.

VII

The Tilak school which had in its ranks men like Lala Lajpat Rai, Bepinchandra Pal and others was consistently preaching trade-unionism and politics to the working class. When the political crisis began to develop, Lala Lajpat Rai was deported to Burma. Bepinchandra Pal and many other leaders were imprisoned.

It is not possible here to survey the strike struggles of that period. But we have some articles in Tilak's paper on this question. Writing in *Kesari* of 11 June 1907, under the caption "Railway Union", he says:

"It is extremely necessary in the modern period of struggle for living to take up the work of organising unions of the western type and run them without break. Some months back an organisation called 'railway union' was established in Calcutta. It is reported that in our part also recently the postmen of Bombay have organised their union. If anywhere there are large numbers of Indians with education and understanding employed, they are there in the railway companies. If they think of it, it is quite easy for them to run such a union with unity and careful attention. Last year, Mr Eknath Ganesh Bhandare had published in

Kesari some correspondence on this matter. We feel confident that if he himself takes the lead in this work and gets a similar type of organisation established, it will earn the sympathies of the people also. In the Kali age, the spiritual, supranatural or physical strength does not reside in each individual separately but according, as the saying goes, 'in Kali age power resides in the collective organisation', it will reside only in the organisation (union). It is needless to say that this principle, embodied in the Puranic dictum, is very valuable."³⁰

The article in *Kesari* on 26 November 1907 with the caption "Strikes and Politics" gives us even a larger review of the strike struggles. Though it is a long piece, it is valuable enough to be quoted at length here :

"Last week the European and Eurasian drivers on the East Indian Railway went on strike. And because the European and Eurasian drivers struck work, all the engines were crippled on the spot . . .

"European military battalions were sent to Asansol station and government's military department took possession of the East Indian Railway. Some prominent European officers and merchants went to discuss conciliation with the engine drivers and chief railway officers and they tried to break the strike by winning over some drivers. But they did not succeed.

"This strike of European drivers has given a good dose of medicine to the bureaucracy. The strike of the telegraphists on the GIP Railway, the strike of the Bombay postmen, the Bombay policemen's leaning towards the strike, the strike of the merchants of Nagar, the strike of the traders of Sawantwadi, strike of the people in Peth, the strike of the workers in the Parel workshop of the GIP Railway, the workers' strike in some textile mills in Bombay, the strike of the workshop in East Indian Railway last year, the strike of the station masters and telegraphists on the East Indian Railway, the strike of the workers in the

30. Translated from Marathi.

Government Press in Calcutta, the strike of the workers in some mills and factories in Calcutta, and such small and big strikes have been taking place in India. During these strikes, government did not hesitate to unequivocally put the blame for them on the political movement. No other strike before inflicted such losses on the travelling public, factory owners and the government as this strike of East Indian European engine drivers. In spite of this, no one ascribes to it a political character. It is true that government has sent military police and military battalions to preserve order. But nobody says that this strike is due to political reasons. Lap dogs in the control and pockets of the government like the *Times of India* are not at all barking at the strikers in the name of political agitation. The originators and organisers of this strike being pure Englishmen, the understanding of the government that strikes in India take place due to political agitation has proved baseless. In Europe not a week passes when there is not a frightful strike going on somewhere. Nobody there says that strikes take place due to politics. Some days back, there was a decision to carry out a gigantic strike of all railway workers in England. Reduction of working hours, increase in wages, more holidays and leave privileges, and such others are the demands generally of all strikers. Not that strikes do not take place due to local and particular reasons also, but they are shortlived. To put the above demands before the factory owners or other proprietors is the right of everyone. And to demand privileges according to these demands by creating stoppage in the work of the factory owners by going on strikes is considered in Europe to be the right of all employees. Not that the British rulers are not aware of all this. But when they come to India they develop a cataract of authoritarianism on their eyes and they cease to see things as they are.”³¹

One thing stands out from these articles. The strike movement was serious and widespread throughout the

31. Translated from Marathi.

country. Secondly, it was denounced by the press of the British ruling class as being motivated by politics and as a part of the political movement that had gathered such momentum. Thirdly, the trade-union movement was developing ideas and proposals of centralising it and giving it a new organised shape, as was already seen in Tilak's speeches before the workers in 1906. The idea of centralisation and coordination is clearly visible in them. The concrete step to founding a central all-India trade-union body was not a far cry, with the all-India strikes leading that way. The government killed that possibility by arresting Tilak and his associates and establishing a reign of terror in 1908.

The strike wave continued for quite some time at least in the textile industry. The Millowners' Association report of 1908 spoke about the workers' "growing awareness of power" and the frequency of strikes. The millowners since many years had conscious plans to prevent the unity of the workers. They purposefully brought workers from other states, with different languages, different castes and different levels of consciousness in order to make them quarrel among themselves and prevent united strike struggles. As far back as 1888, Mr Tata wrote: "... it should be borne in mind that the older operatives are getting educated and beginning to have a faint glimmer of their true position in the industrial development. They pretty freely know when to strike and when to demand higher wages."³²

So the clever Tatas planned to weaken this rising consciousness by importing labour from UP. There is on record a Tata scheme of calculated mix up of the Bombay workers prepared in the year 1897. Morris quotes Ralph C. James as saying "Mill management thinks and feels in *geographical-origin* terms... management consciously considers and plans the '*community*' composition of its mill. Prejudice concerning a community's efficiency and *political* proclivi-

32. Quoted by M. D. Morris, *The Emergence of Industrial Labour Force in India*, p. 54.

ties are reflected in hiring practice.”³³

That is how the bourgeoisie planned the disunity of our working class. But the crisis of 1905-8 and the consequent united strike struggles defeated those wily schemes of the bourgeoisie. And the workers' movement took a big stride much to the chagrin of both the British and Indian capitalists, who though politically divided agreed in the common exploitation of the Indian working class.

VIII

The rising political unity of the masses received some setback due to the split in the National Congress. The right wing led by Pherozeshah Mehta planned the split by changing the venue of the session to Surat, where he was assured help and protection against the masses who were following the left led by Tilak and which included Lala Lajpat Rai, Bepinchandra Pal and others.

At the same time, the British ruling circles began to talk of granting some constitutional reforms which later became the Morley-Minto scheme.

But the mass movement against the Bengal partition, the boycott accompanied by workers' strikes, heightened by the economic crisis could not be controlled.

At this very period the 'terrorist'-revolutionaries also intensified their activities and went into action, as was evidenced in the Maniktala Bomb Case, the Muzaffarpur killings, etc.

As had happened at the time of the Rand case in 1898, *Kesari* wrote four articles on these actions. The 'hot-heads' were criticised and their action disapproved as futile. But the main blame was laid on government's terror policies and denial of India's aspirations for swaraj.

Besides writing articles, Tilak did something more. A government dispatch says:

“On the 21st and 22nd May (1908) Tilak attended meetings of the extremists to discuss the situation caused by the

33. Op. cit., p. 81, emphasis added.

discovery of the anarchist plot in Calcutta. One of the resolutions passed at these meetings was to the effect that subscriptions should be raised for the defence of the Calcutta anarchists. The meeting also passed a resolution that 'the regrettable occurrences were in their opinion due to the persistent disregard of public opinion and continued policy of repression on the part of government'.³⁴

This was enough to give government a pretext to put their plan of repression and muzzling the Tilakite national leadership from going into action. Tilak was arrested on 24 June 1908, tried and sentenced on 22 July to six years' deportation, plus serving the unexpired portion of the sentence of 1898 when he was prematurely released due to extremely bad health, on the representation of the public and many eminent personalities including Max Muller.

The workers of Bombay were angered by the vengeful sentences and went on a general strike. All the mills closed down. And not only the mills. The middle classes, the shopkeepers, the merchants and others also shut down and there was a complete hartal or bandh as we call it nowadays.

The police and the army were called in. The people fought. The heroic struggle and hand-to-hand skirmishes and clashes between the workers and the police spread to all the areas of the city, from north to south. In the fighting there were not only Marathi workers. Factory workers, peons, young men of all professions and communities were in action. It was the first heroic political general strike of great intensity and dimensions. It lasted six days and took several days to cool off.

In order to give the reader an idea of some of the happenings, we are reproducing as addenda the dispatches of the police and government of Bombay of that period in which they give day-to-day account of the happenings. We are also giving an article written by D. C. Home in the *New Age Monthly* of June 1953 based on the material he

34. *Source Material*, Vol. II, p. 223.

collected from the files of the *Bombay Chronicle* of that period.

The terror rule and repression that followed this great struggle need not be taken up here. To show the spirit of the times and how the students were also in the revolutionary stream, we are giving a report from the *Kal* of 31 July 1908 and *Rashtramata* of 1 August 1908, sent by their correspondent from London:

“I have already informed you that Mr Harnam Singh and R. M. Khan left the Cirencester College and refused to rejoin as the Principal called Nanasaheb and Laxmibai murderers. A dinner was given in honour of the two students for their resolute conduct.”³⁵

How well and wide the forces of the national-liberation struggle were advancing is reflected in the above action of two students.

The assassination actions of the national-revolutionary armed groups continued hereafter also. Dhingra killed Sir William Curzon Wylie in London on 1 July 1909. Anant Kanhere killed Jackson, collector of Nasik, on 21 December 1909. And so on.

But these actions did not evoke any response in the form of mass actions as the political revolutionary mass line of Tilak and his arrest did.

IX

What is the evaluation of the 1908 events, particularly the strike wave and the political general strike and bandh in Bombay?

The first is that the working class had taken its first step to emerge as an active fighting force of the national-revolutionary front.

Secondly, the weapon of its economic struggles, i.e. the trade union, had taken shape and was on the verge of taking an all-India form of organisation.

Thirdly, the revolutionary intelligentsia had decided to

35. *Ibid.*, p. 954.

give the necessary ideological and political outlook of the anti-imperialist national revolution to the working class and the peasantry. This ideological push had necessarily to come from outside the actual ranks of the working class because the oppressing classes, whether British or pre-British, had kept them bereft of intellectual equipment.

Fourthly, the well-planned policies of the employers to divide the workers on the basis of caste, language or religion had failed to prevent this burst of national-revolutionary unity of their class as such, though as yet they had not begun to organise as a class. The rudiments of class consciousness had begun to appear through the economic strike struggles. But they had not come to the stage of asking for themselves what a class is and what makes it. Nor had they come to the stage of asking for whom the swaraj to come was, as they were going to ask at the Jharia session of the AITUC in December 1921. As we have seen earlier, these questions were hurled on the stage of world history at the end of the first world war by the October Revolution and the subsequent wave of European revolutions and working-class actions. They could not have been anticipated by the workers in India of 1908, though the Paris Commune had put them before Europe in 1871.

The fifth lesson was that given the political-ideological equipment, the working class could produce its own organisational cadres and methods to meet the demands of militant mass action.

One glaring weakness of the 1905-1908 situation was that the peasantry and tribal masses had not gone into action on any big scale, except in some parts of Punjab, Bengal and Madras.

It has always perplexed the bourgeoisie and also the petty-bourgeois intellectuals as to how the worker without any union or party or any other visible forms had organised the great action of 1908. Group after group of workers was moving and giving a type of guerilla answer to the movements of the British police and military forces. The

officials themselves have raised the question as they were surprised by the skill and plan of the 'rioters'.

The answer they gave was that all this was the result of the conspiratorial activities of Tilak and his men. In this connection it is worth mentioning a report given by Pradhan and Bhagwat in their book on Tilak which says:

"Tilak just before his trial had addressed two meetings at Chinchpokli, Bombay, on June 6th and 7th, 1908. He advised the millhands, especially the jobbers and head-jobbers to form local committees of millhands for the purpose of discouraging liquor drinking among them."³⁶

Certainly he did not limit himself to that subject only. Everyone in India knows that prohibition in those days was one of the planks of the anti-imperialist movement and prohibition meetings were invariably hot political meetings. No wonder if those mill committees provided the leadership for the general strike of 1908.

The report of the Bombay government dated 27 August 1908 says the following on this question:

"As pointed out, the idea of organising had already been put into the minds of the millhands by Tilak not long before his imprisonment, and to prove that the seed did not fall on barren soil, I may mention that since Tilak spoke on the subject, an association has been formed styled 'The Bombay Millhands Defence Association'. The object and reasons of this association are clear, and I do not propose to discuss them but what I desire to call attention to is the fact that it is the first step towards organisation on the part of millhands."³⁷

The next natural question on this great event is—did anyone feel and speak out the peculiarity, the political newness of this phenomenon which had appeared on the historical scene?

It is necessary to mention in this connection the famous statement of Lenin, who noted this event as indicating the

36. Op. cit., p. 231.

37. *Source Material*, Vol. II, p. 271.

fact that the working class in India had begun to fight with anti-imperialist political and class consciousness. He said:

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

That Lenin with his science of Marxism and the depth of his understanding should have said it is a valuable factor in our understanding of those events. Question is: did the Indian leadership do anything to understand it?

Hardly had peace come to Bombay than *Kesari* began to analyse the events. A series of five articles appeared. They had the most interesting heading—“Why is Bombay Ahead of All?” All over India there was anger about Tilak’s conviction. But no one expressed that anger as Bombay had done. Why did Bombay do it and put itself at the head of the all-India feeling of protest against British imperialism? That was the question put in those articles which were written by K. P. Khadilkar. It was his pen that had written the reports at the time of the Rand assassination which sent Tilak to jail. Again it was his pen that had written some of the articles on the Calcutta bomb affair, which again sent Tilak to six years’ transportation. It was he who wrote the guerilla war articles. Of course, all of them were written under Tilak’s instructions and sanction. And now Khadilkar wrote a fine analysis of the 1908 events and has given us almost a class viewpoint of the events, though not so clear as one would like it to be.

The analysis sounds unusual in the writings of that period. His main proposition is that Bombay was ahead because of its men in industry and trade, i.e. what we may call the national bourgeoisie and the working class. Industrialisation binds men together in a collective as nothing else does. Agriculture fosters isolation and dependence. Industry does the reverse. Hence Bombay workers behaved as no one else. He also mentions that it was

the women who organised the first protest meeting, not men. And the students too. But Bombay was ahead of all because of its working class was the conclusion that comes out of those five articles, written between 22 September and 20 October 1908.

The *Times of India* of 25 July 1908 sums up the view of the British ruling class on Tilak, which shows its hatred and fear of the man and also the revolutionary essence of Tilak's struggle and methods:

"It was not this or that article of the seditionist for which he was brought to book, but it was the whole tenor of his life and tone of his writing that was working havoc and creating mischief in the minds and hearts of gullible and illiterate and half-educated masses of the people. His intriguing ways, his unscrupulous methods, his incitement to disobedience to lawful authorities, his pernicious influence upon the young and the unwary, his underground work, all these should be taken into account in the adjudication of his case."

This summing up by the enemy of the line of Tilak, the general strike and the battle of the masses shows how this line of revolution was far more effective and correct than any other line at that time followed by other groups of revolutionaries of the school of individual assassination and annihilation, in whose 'defence', in fact, Tilak had written those articles which were made a pretext for his conviction. And this line was also reflected in the battles of this period in Bengal, Punjab and Madras in particular.

Tilak was the only leader of the anti-imperialist national-revolutionary movement who combined all forms of struggle, including the peaceful and the nonpeaceful, legal and illegal, open and conspiratorial, always teaching and learning from the masses and always keeping himself at the head of the masses. Though he had his own religious views, he never mixed up religion with politics. The communalists and casteists tried to attack him on the question of social reforms and thereby sidetrack the main political

issue of the anti-imperialist revolution and independence. But the masses knew better and remained with him till the last.

The British government, while beheading the movement with terror and force, was also forced to offer concessions. The Morley-Minto reforms introduced legislative councils (with practically no powers except to ask questions!).

They also had a Factory Commission appointed and introduced a legal limit of eleven hours on the working day in the factories and some nominal constraints on juvenile labour. But imperialist rule remained imperialist rule and kept the patriots in prison.

When the world war broke out in 1914, Tilak was released. He resumed his activities which soon brought him into conflict with government on the question of war effort, which he refused to support unconditionally. During the war, there were heroic efforts by the "armed action wing" of the revolutionary nationalists to incite mutiny in the army and to import German arms. But they all failed. And many valuable patriotic lives were lost.

X

We need not recount the story further. The world war imposed heavy burdens on the people for war loans and recruits to the army. Tilak took up the question by refusing to campaign either for recruits or the war fund which brought him in conflict not only with government but with Gandhi also and all the moderate wing of politicians. Tilak was once again prosecuted and bound down "to keep peace". He paid the security and resumed his line.

The imposition of war fund and recruit quotas on the villages angered the peasants. The workers were not yet going into strike action. But as soon as the war reached the 1917 phase and the Russian revolution took place, things began to stir. Slowly strike actions began for dearness allowance against rising prices. With the end of the war in 1918, the floodgates of mass discontent flew open.

The postwar crisis began. We need not go into details. To sum up, we may say the following:

The anti-imperialist national-revolutionary front that had begun to take shape with rapid strides from 1905, the Bengal partition, the boycott, the split in the Congress and the strikes of 1907-8 had gathered within its fold the working class, the peasantry, the students and the revolutionary anti-imperialist intelligentsia as representatives of the national bourgeoisie by 1905-8.

The war gave the national bourgeoisie more economic and political strength. With the end of the war, the October Revolution and the first world crisis of capitalism, India stepped into the period of anti-imperialist colonial-liberation movement with greater force.

The working class again took its place in the struggle. The national front gathered more strength and began the attack in 1920. One of the instruments for the mobilisation of this attack was the AITUC as seen in Bombay and Jharia. Therefore let us connect our account to the foundation of the AITUC.

How did things come to it? And once again, we have to revert to the role of Tilak and his "Nationalist or Extremist Party".

Tilak went to England ostensibly to file his appeal in the Chirol Case before the Privy Council. Once there, he began his political work about which a few points are worth mentioning.

Before going to England, he sent five thousand dollars to Lala Lajpat Rai, who had been in exile for a number of years in America, for the American branch of the Home Rule League for India, which he had inaugurated on 22 October 1917.

What were Tilak's activities in England? Let us see the government dispatches on this question:

"Tilak was reported to have been taking keen interest in the military situation, especially as regards the unrest and dissatisfaction in connection with the demobilisation. He

the delegate appointed by the government of India. So instead of going to Washington, he returned to India where the first thing he did was to go to the workers' meetings in Bombay and explain to them things as they happened.

The government report says:

"On 29th November 1919, an open air meeting attended by about 10,000 was convened behind the Elphinstone mills by the leaders of the labouring classes for the purpose of presenting an address to Tilak, their chosen representative for the Washington Labour Conference on his return from England. President Mawji Govindji opened the proceedings."⁴¹

Tilak in his speech described conditions in England and compared the wages in India and England:

"He... at some length explained why he had not gone to Washington in connection with the Labour Conference, the gist of which was that having been elected by the labourers as their representative, he declined to go as an assistant to the man selected by government.

"Proceeding, he said, he had brought a message from the English labouring classes. It was that they should form trade union, and the stronger they were, the sooner they would obtain their rights. They should not be deterred by opposition in this respect. He strongly recommended unity between different castes of Hindus and between Hindus and Muhammadans."⁴²

So here was the same theme again as that of 1908. But this time the world experience had raised new vistas.

Tilak had returned with a plan of starting a Social-Democratic Party in India with a new programme, such as the National Congress so far had never attempted. Secondly, he had plans for starting English and Marathi dailies in Bombay and to make Bombay the centre of his activities, which to some extent it always had been, in the working-class and middle-class areas. Thirdly, he plan-

41. Ibid, p. 317.

42. Ibid, pp. 318-19.

was kept fully informed by his labour friends concerning the spreading of bolshevist tendencies in England, and was hoping, with the downfall of the government to find scope for his activities in labour and socialist circles.

"He is also reported to have given £2000 to the Labour Party and was much disappointed at the result of the election."³⁸

"With the Sinn Fein movement, too, Tilak's adherents have formed an alliance... he had... made himself as pleasant as possible to the ILP."³⁹

The reports go on and one says:

"He has the strongest hope of the deliverance of India by the bolsheviks and was delighted with the Afghan imbroglio and the Amritsar riots, which occurred as a result of Gandhi's agitation..."

"As a contrast to the studied moderation of Tilak's language in public, it is worth noting that in the course of a conversation about New Year's Day, he expressed his disbelief that India would ever be granted Home Rule, stated that the Montagu-Chelmsford scheme was purely a blind, instanced Egypt still a slave despite her control over her own finances, army, commercial contracts and industrial developments and stated that only by a 'clean cut', by a complete severance from England, can India look to become nation among nations."⁴⁰

The English visit gave him and his associates new sights and horizons. He saw the trade unions in action. He saw the British Trades Union Congress and the British Labour Party as well as the ILP at work.

And was it not time to think of something like that in the developing Indian situation?

With those ideas in mind, he agreed to become a delegate for the Washington Labour Conference elected by the meetings of workers in Bombay. As already stated he refused to go when he was made only an adviser to

38. *Ibid.*, p. 313.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 314.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 315:

ned to develop the radicalisation of the mass movement and launch struggles for swaraj.

For the paper itself, Tilak had chosen Barrister V. M. Pawar as his representative and secretary of the new company. Pawar had been put in charge of making arrangements to buy new up-to-date machines. For location, he had purchased for Tilak the premises of the oldest Marathi daily in Bombay named the *Induprakash*, belonging to the well-known publisher D. S. Yande.

Tilak had also asked Pawar while organising the daily to take up the question of trade unions and the growing strike movement. It was during the discussion of these plans that the question of founding a central organisation of the trade union was worked out.

Lala Lajpat Rai was advised to return to India as things were fast changing. He came back and was welcomed at a huge public meeting presided over by Jinnah and addressed by Tilak and Mrs Besant on 20 February 1920 in Bombay. A special welcome was given to him by the Students' Council of Bombay on 21 February at the same place. Tilak agreed to preside over this meeting also. It was addressed by R. S. Nimbkar and myself. We did not invite Besant or Jinnah to this meeting, as we were opposed to both on the question of their political line.

Within a few days of this, I with one other companion, named Patwardhan alias Kamalakar, met Tilak at his residence in Khare's bungalow. We asked for directions on further work. The first task we were given was to prepare for picketing the depots from where the contractors and gangmen exported indentured labourers to Fiji and other places and to the tea gardens. Both Tilak and Gandhi had taken up this issue in a big way. We were also told to work among the workers, form trade unions and begin to assist in the preparation for holding an all-India conference.

At this time Wheeler of the Anglo-Burma Railway Servants' Association was holding an all-India conference in Bombay, in which he asked us to assist him.

Soon, Dewan Chamanlal came on the scene and joined hands with Pawar and others. Chamanlal, hailing from Punjab, did not know Marathi and could not build a bridge directly to the workers, except through Pawar and young men like us. He could not have made Lalaji president in the Parel workers' meeting nor got the galaxy that was seen on the AITUC dais on the inaugural occasion, without Tilak's initiative and advice. How this helped we shall see in the next part when we come to the men on the platform and the floor.

At the time, there were many leaders doing some work among the mill workers with a variety of societies, sabhas and unions. Among them were Bole, Achrekar, Mayekar, Baptista, Jhabvalla, etc. But except Baptista, who was a disciple of Tilak and commanded respect for his honesty and selfless work, few had any stable following. Jhabvalla was working on his own. The others were 'moderates' in politics and generally disliked strikes. So strikes just took place without the leaders and then the strikers sought the leaders to do some talking and drafting for them, for which they were paid well. Most of them except Baptista had one thing in common—they disliked politics, feared Tilak and government and would have liked to avoid all strikes. Many were caste-minded also. But the working class in Bombay, which had fought in 1908 and was now launching big strikes demanding higher wages, bonus and reduction of hours and Home Rule or swaraj, was driving every leader and shade of thought to line up with it.

And so the AITUC had to be founded and was founded—"not a day too soon", as Lajpat Rai said in his address, when somebody asked if the worker was ready for such a thing. What was really due in 1908 took place in 1920. The AITUC at last came and came with a bang as we have already seen. But the man who so much worked for it did not live to see it: He died on 1 August 1920.

3. The Dais and the Floor

There are in the pages of the record of the proceedings of the first and second sessions of the AITUC things which one might like to overlook. Having seen the picture of the grand march of the Bombay strikers at the founding session of 1920, the great all-India political general strike and hartal of 17 November 1921 against the Prince of Wales's arrival in India, and the miners' strike for the Jharia session of 30 November 1921 one is inclined to skip over what looks as the prosaic part of the reports. But they are not so prosaic as one might think. There is a world of meaning in them too.

Take, for example, the list of those who adorned the platform at Bombay⁴³ and the list at Jharia.⁴⁴ Is there any necessity to look into those faces after fifty years, during which time millions have died and millions have been born and a whole nation has been liberated and is going ahead with new faces, new names and new fames? I think it is necessary to look into those lists.

Or take the list of members of the first executive of the AITUC elected at its first session.⁴⁵

It is not only necessary to know who were there. It is important to note who was not there and why. History is bound to ask at least of one name—why it was not there?

43. *Infra*, pp. 9-16.

44. p. 108:

45. p. 80-81.

As already said, the dominant note of the founding session as well as of the Jharia session was the anti-imperialist national-revolutionary movement. Its leadership was represented by the National Congress. Every class in that movement read its own class demands along with and within the general demand for swaraj. But the various classes in the Congress and the liberation movement had their own class contradictions. The workers' demands for higher wages were opposed by the employers, Indian and European alike. But the Indian employers' demand for industrialisation and protection from British competition was supported by the workers but opposed by the British.

So an unwritten historically-evolved agreement came into being. The working class and the national bourgeoisie would fight the common national enemy on a common programme of national front, and during that common fight, the national bourgeoisie and the working class should adjust as far as possible their contradictions in the sphere of economic and social demands on the basis of humanism and social justice.

This compromise was a necessity, a national necessity and also a class necessity. An anti-imperialist national unity, without giving up the class viewpoint, was put forward both at Bombay and Jharia sessions. This unity and contradiction were reflected very vividly in those names of people who sat on the dais and in the committees mentioned above.

Let us look at the founding list.

Headed by Lala Lajpat Rai, the revolutionary, there were, on the platform as the records show, Pandit Motilal Nehru and Vithalbhair Patel, well-known Congress leaders. But on the Bombay platform and in the city of big industry and high finance, the heads that drew pointed attention, not only by their big pugrees but by their big purses, also, were men like Lallubhai Samaldas, Lalji Narainji, Hansraj P. Thackersey, Lallubhai D. Jhaveri. In the postwar boom period at that time when the rush for floating new companies began, many of which sank in the sea within a few years like the "South Sea Bubble", there was not one prospectus which

did not contain the name of Lallubhai Samaldas. Hansraj P. Thackersey had made millions on his prewar stocks of German dyes, whose prices rocketed when the war broke out and made Hansraj a millionaire overnight.

Two more names deserve mention in this class of rich men and they are Mavji Govindji and L. R. Tairsee.

Laxmidas Rauji Tairsee, who later was elected treasurer and in his speech promised that the AITUC would not run short of funds,⁴⁶ was a very honest man in his personal and financial dealings, though sometimes he did things with the funds at his disposal which politically may not be correct. For example, as one responsible for the Tilak Swaraj Fund, he allowed part of it to be invested in the big Ashok Swadeshi Stores, which actually sold foreign goods. He tried to correct it when I pointed this out to him. Despite this, the AITUC had a treasurer who at that time deserved that place and when he left it, it was not his fault.

A few words about Mavji Govindji may be put on record. He too was a rich man. But he addressed meetings of workers in company with Tilak in the Parel area of Bombay. He was interested in research work in Indian history and so he financed the publication of some of the well-known Rajwade volumes of Maratha historical records.

The proceedings mention Mian Mohommed Haji Jan Mohommed Chhotani as having donated Rs 500 to the AITUC session.⁴⁷ This gentleman was the biggest timber merchant and saw-millowner in the city but began to lose heavily when he went over to Khilafat agitation. It is said that secret British agents set his timber-yards on fire. Later on, he tried to salvage himself by asking for a loan of Rs sixteen lakhs from the Tilak Swaraj Fund of the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee, which proposal was opposed by me as being beyond the objectives of that fund and it was not adopted.

In the record, there is a mention of the resolution on Delegates to International Labour Conference being supported

by Subhani.⁴⁸ This was Umar Subhani, one of the most progressive millowners of Bombay. It was his support which defeated the move of the loyalists in Bombay to raise a memorial to Lord Willingdon, the departing governor of Bombay. Subhani sent all the workers of his mills to the Town Hall where the sheriff had called a public meeting to pass the resolution of thanks and the memorial. There were clashes between the police on one side and the workers and students on the other. It was on this occasion that Mrs Jinnah gave a bold lead to the people on the streets by standing along with them and shouting slogans and thus earned deserved fame. This agitation was launched principally by B. G. Horniman, the editor of *Bombay Chronicle*, who was later deported. A big part was played in it by Jinnah also. And hence both were at the AITUC session, along with Umar Subhani.

Umar met a tragic end. Due to the machinations of the British government, Umar failed to meet his cotton contract on the market and lost first his prosperous mills and then all his fortune. He ended his career by committing suicide. When we young college boys started a students' magazine in English in 1917 Subhani gave a handsome donation to it. He financed the *Bombay Chronicle*, the activities of the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee and many of its leaders, including Mrs Sarojini Naidu.

The list of prominent names has not mentioned N. C. Kelkar, who took over the work of Tilak after his death. In the session, he moved the resolution supporting the textile workers' strike.⁴⁹ But later he and his party did not support the NCO movement, especially of the students. He really was a great scholar but not a revolutionary political leader, despite the training which his preceptor Tilak gave him. He was a good liberal democrat.

Not to forget the champions of the women's movement, attention may be drawn to two names—Miss Joshi and Mrs Avantikabai Gokhale. Miss Nagutai Joshi was a doctor by

profession and one of the most beautiful women in the social circles of the day. She and Mrs Jinnah brought a dazzle to the platform, by the side of Mrs Gokhale, who was a serene, steady, social reform worker in those days and spoke on public platforms.

Just a little away, one could not miss seeing the slim, handsome and cultured figure of Syed Abdulla Brelvi of the *Bombay Chronicle*. He was an asset to the national movement. Some eighteen years later, he was on the Bombay Textile Labour Inquiry Committee, under the Congress ministry, and was helpful in giving a good award to the workers.

K. F. Nariman, a young radical Parsi, was at that time an exception in the Parsi community which as a whole took moderate and loyalist positions in the politics of the day. He later sprang to fame, when he exposed the corruption in the Bombay government in the Back Bay Reclamation Scheme, in the well-known Harvey-Nariman Case. He was in the thick of Congress politics, until Sardar Patel nearly ruined his career and reputation in the 1937 crisis of ministry-making.

That was our national bourgeoisie on the AITUC platform right from the progressive millowners, company promoters, merchants and traders to modest middle-class men and women, lawyers and solicitors like Kher, Ginwalla, Nanavati, etc., and staid upper-middle-class women's leaders.

I need not point out to Mrs Annie Besant and her retinue. B. P. Wadia had certainly the right to be there because of his Madras Labour Union. But as a follower of Mrs Besant, he could not make much headway. Mrs Besant had lost her former standing, as a defender of "India as a Nation", because of her opposition to Tilak and Gandhi and support to the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms.

It should, however, be noted that the platform was not all of congressmen. The Besant-Wadia group was not of the Congress. N. M. Joshi, who later became one of the great builders of the AITUC, did not belong to the Congress. Nor many of his liberal friends like M. D. Dalvi, Ginwalla, etc.

Opposite to them but cheering them sat the working-class and student helpers. The political-minded student groups had been mobilised for all the odd jobs of the session, in which our Wilson College group was the biggest and most politicalised. The workers who came could not be put into that small theatre. Hence they were spilling over into the bylanes and the maidan, which was just across the road. There were five textile mills within half an hour's walking distance from the session, besides the docks. Though their great idol, Tilak, had died and not many of the leaders on the platform had direct working-class appeal, except Baptista, the very atmosphere of political radicalisation and the current strike struggles drew the workers to the session.

As regards the students, that section which came from the poor middle-class belonging to the Marathi-Gujarati people had come over to politics and to the movement led by Tilak and Gandhi and the Congress.

The workers and student groups are not listed on the platform. But they are found in the list of the Standing Committee members, of whom a few should be mentioned.

A faithful person who stuck to the trade unions till his last was the modest but active worker called Bapu Ramchandra (Shinde). He was a worker in the tramway workshop and was always busy with his union work at the cost of his health and his wages. Another name was Shankar Ladoba (Mhapankar) who later became a controversial secretary of the Bombay Girmi Kamgar Union in the stormy days of 1929. Pandurang Sabaji Masurkar still carries on the work of a Tilak Service Society. Mistri Karam Ilahi has perhaps left no record. But one can say that to have about twelve workers in the Standing Committee of 82 was not bad for that period, but not so good either.

Were any of the shining millionaires on the platform taken on the committee? Thank heavens, none of them—they did not come in. Not even Umar Subhani. All of them left it to L. R. Tairsee and partly to Mavji Govindji.

Our revolutionary student group—which due to the non-

cooperation call and other political and social activities was in the forefront—had its place not only in the session but also in the committee. Our best speaker and most turbulent, irrepressible organiser, Nimbkar, had made his speech on a resolution.⁵⁰ Another of our ace organisers, V. D. Sathaye (not V. J. as printed), had also made a speech.⁵¹ But we had no time to sit on the Standing Committee or continue to be at the call of Chamanlal and Pawar, who did not recommend themselves much to our continuous allegiance and service. They had neither a proper plan or method of work, which later on led to quite a disaster, but which need not be discussed here. But we had a fine active, outspoken and brave young man in our group. He was fond of the Irish example and their republican army. We put him on the Standing Committee: His name is Nadkarni.⁵²

I myself did not go on the committee. I was conducting a students' strike against compulsory teaching of the Bible in the Wilson College. For that reason I and twelve others (two of whom were put on the AITUC Standing Committee) were thrown out of the college on 9 October 1920. There was also the additional reason that I was spearheading the noncooperation movement of the students in Bombay, for which we were organising a conference under the presidentship of Rev C. F. Andrews. I was chairman of the reception committee. That conference got the foreign delegates who had come for the AITUC session to speak. It met on 18 December 1920, on the eve of the Nagpur Congress session, to which we sent trainloads of workers and students to defeat the opponents of the NCO.

The other person who represented our view, though not of our student group, was G. K. Gadgil, a very self-sacrificing, efficient, hardworking young man. He was made one of the assistant secretaries. Chamanlal put him on the fabulous salary of Rs 250 per month and himself on Rs 500 as general secretary. Such salaries in that period looked

50. p. 58.

51. *Ibid.*

52. No. 77 in the list, p. 81.

scandalous. But Chamanlal and Pawar were out to make the AITUC look at least on paper like the British Trades Union Congress, which they had seen in England.

But Gadgil never got his wages. He borrowed, lived and starved and ultimately in despair and grief left the movement. We could not trace him again. The entry in the records against his name that he got Rs 900 as salary (for nine months) is a bogus entry.⁵³ And it reveals its truth by the pompous remark made twice in the records that D. Chamanlal makes a donation to the Trade Union Congress of all salaries due to him.⁵⁴

It is not relevant to pursue this aspect of the matter here because many unwholesome developments took place in Bombay in the next two years in the AITUC office. Chamanlal relieved Pawar of his general secretaryship and became himself the general secretary. Of course, Chamanlal was more active and political than Pawar, who later in his life went to Gwalior state and became a minister there through his family connections. As a minister he tried to suppress the textile strike there. In the resulting clash several workers died and Pawar had to go.

Another young man who worked hard with Gadgil at that time was G. S. Kanthi, who also left soon.

We cannot fail to notice the name of V. Chakkarai Chettiar.⁵⁵ Later, in AITUC history, he became its president in the period 1952-57.

One more name in the list worthy of attention is that of A. B. Kolhatkar. This is the famed adventurer in Marathi journalism in Bombay, who initiated a new style of reportage and satire. He gave good publicity to workers' activities in his well-known daily *Sandesh*.

The second session of the AITUC at Jharia showed the same picture of national front as in Bombay but with a difference. It was in essence a congress of coalminers. At Bombay you could not say that it was only the textile

53. p. 86.

54. pp. 85-86.

55. No. 29 in the list, p. 80.

workers or postmen or tramwaymen and railwaymen who dominated the gathering.

In Bombay the topmost section of the Indian industrial houses, some of whom had built their relationships with the British even before 1857 and more so after, refused to take note of the trade-union movement or the AITUC. The European houses, of course, did not. All of them had seen what fire the working class showed in 1908, whose memories they had not forgotten. But many of those Indian sections who had come up in the beginning of the 20th century and particularly during and after the war were not afraid to patronise the opening session of the AITUC. The Tatas, Petits, Fazalbhoy, Bradys and Sassoons scoffed at the 'show', both of the AITUC and the National Congress. But the house of Lallubhai Samaldas, Hansraj Pragji and Subhani saw the signs of the new age. It was that national bourgeoisie which wanted swaraj of their own, in which the Mahatma had allocated a harmonious place for all classes and no class struggle. Lala Lajpat Rai's address did not disturb them.

The Jharia session showed a new feature which, though in class-essence was the same, was differently composed. Partly it was a retreat from Bombay and partly an advance, a reflex of the growing sharpness of the contradictions.

At Bombay, the Reception Committee chairman was Baptista, a barrister and a well-to-do man. But he was known to be championing the workers' cause in his own way. In Jharia, the Reception Committee chairman was Ramjash Agarwalla, himself a big mine-owner. He had spent thousands of rupees to build a big pandal for the session. At the same time, the mine-owners, both Indian and European, had opposed the holding of the session in Jharia and asked for a ban on it. But the government which by now came to realise the mood of the masses did not take the risk.

Ramjash Agarwalla made a speech, in which he declared: "Our Hindu society has evolved on the socialist basis" and asked: "do we not all feel the call of the epoch? I

is the epoch of the sudra. It has come to raise the sudra from the dust to the throne." But to realise that socialism, the workers must "learn to suffer, suffer and suffer again".⁵⁶ I wonder how it would have sounded in Bombay!

And, as if to make the sudra feel the touch of the throne, Chamanlal wired to the press from Jharia on 5 December the following news item: "The Chairman of the Reception Committee, the genial and kind-hearted Ramjash Agarwalla, and Vice-President, Seth Hardeodas Agarwalla, presented *gold medals two each* to Chhotalal Jain, Jagannath Gupta, Secretary, Reception Committee, Lala Daulat Ram, C-in-C of Tilak Seva Samiti, and Gopal Krishna Gadgil, Assistant Secretary of the AITUC..."⁵⁷

The national bourgeoisie was at our service in Jharia as much or more than in Bombay. But Jharia showed another special feature. The representative and president of the *European* "Indian Mining Association", Pattinson, attended the session. He even made a speech⁵⁸ on how workers can improve their earnings and conditions by full six days' work and how his brethren were prepared to negotiate things with the leaders of the workers. And when the resolution on hand-spinning and weaving was put to vote, "*even Europeans attending raised their hands*".⁵⁹ Of course, they did not raise their hands on other resolutions!

Why did the Europeans in Jharia attend and not in Bombay? The spirit of revolt had matured more during the one year from Bombay to Jharia. The national strike against Prince of Wales's visit was a warning of what was coming. The Europeans, isolated as they were in the mining area, unlike in Bombay, were finding a safety valve to sidetrack the miners' attack. Secondly, the Indian mine-owners, despite Ramjash Agarwalla, had shown hostility to the session and to Agarwalla. The Europeans, by attending, sought to divert the attack to the Indian owners in whose mines the conditions of work and wages were worse

56. p. 137.

58. pp.124-28 & 173.

57. p. 159.

59. pp. 120, 172.

than in those of European owned mines. The meaning of this shrewd tactic was later realised by the Indian mine-owners. They realised their mistake and waited upon the AITUC President to explain and express regret.⁶⁰ In Bombay neither the Europeans attended nor did the Indians regret. Tatas banned the workers from going to Jharia and the session passed a resolution against this. Tata textile workers in Bombay flocked to the session, but Jamshedpur's iron men could not go to Jharia.

In essence, the national front at Jharia was the same as in Bombay. Pattinson's attendance at Jharia should not be exaggerated. None of the European jute millowners and their Indian partners cared to look at Jharia, except to warn the viceroy of the impending catastrophe and act. Hence the Jharia session did well to pass a resolution moved by R. Agarwalla himself, saying: "This Congress condemns the attitude taken by the Indian Mining Association, the Indian Mining Federation and the Chamber of Commerce and warns them that such attitude will only precipitate the bitterest of class wars between employers and employees."⁶¹

Swaraj was to dawn on 31 December 1921 according to the Congress resolution and the promise of Mahatma Gandhi. So all the Brahmins and Kshatriyas and all the Agarwalla clans wanted to keep in step with the new sudra and his epoch, "to raise him to the throne"—not to rule but to suffer and suffer more!

Jharia was one step ahead of Bombay because the Indian revolution had taken a big stride from Bombay, with the rousing slogan of "Swaraj in one year!" The Jharia session looked like a roaring sea of miners, everywhere with women and children and all, surging up from the "death-pits" of Bihar and Bengal. Swami Vishwananda, their leader, shouted the warning of history to bring reason to the employers.

He said, "the spirit they were seeing today around them

60. p. 175:

61. p. 127.

was not engendered by him, but it had come from outside and if they were to stem the tide of the surging wave, the only remedy lay in the Trade Union Congress. And if proper steps were not immediately taken, Russian bolshevism would enter India and would spread like anything.”⁶²

The threat succeeded and Pattinson agreed to give a wage increase to the miners—whether to stem bolshevism or the miners or the Swami, we cannot say. Anyway, the sudra swore by bolshevism and got substantial wage increase to begin with.

When next year’s New Year Day did not bring swaraj, what happened? That is a story for the third session.

But I may be permitted to mention here that six months after the Bombay session of October 1920, I had put out in April 1921 before the Indian revolutionaries and the working class my book entitled *Gandhi vs Lenin* and the perspectives and tactics of the Indian revolution. May it be that Swami Vishwananda’s threat and Agarwalla’s throne-shaking sudra were inspired by that perspective? But who knows how ideas travelled in those days across seas and mountains!

Jharia also received messages from the national leadership. C. R. Das, Motilal and Jawaharlal Nehru and Rajendra Prasad and those who were in the Bombay session sent their greetings. But Jharia showed new people coming on the scene from the Bengal-Bihar area, with prominent congressmen and women on the side of the AITUC and the miners in particular.

Without once again repeating what has been previously said about the AITUC as the organ of the Indian working class, representing on its “class-platform” the front of the anti-imperialist forces, let us proceed to see who was not there, but should have been there.

Pandit Jawaharlal’s message had come though he did not. In the records, he is described as “leader of the pea-

sants". Where was Subhaschandra Bose, who later played a big role in the AITUC?

Subhasbabu (now called Netaji) had gone for his ICS training in September 1919 and returned only on 16 July 1921. After seeing Mahatma Gandhi, he set himself to the task of organising the hartal of 25 December 1921 against the Prince of Wales's visit. The hartal and strike were total. This he did under the leadership of C. R. Das. Both C. R. Das and Subhas Bose were arrested on 10 December 1921. Hence their participation could not be expected at Jharia.

The greatest among absentees, the biggest missing name, was that of Mahatma Gandhi. He neither attended nor sent a message.

Though Tilak was the moving spirit of the AITUC formation in its first phase before his death, Mahatma Gandhi had also been consulted. *He did not approve of the idea.* And when the AITUC session was held, he refused to attend or send a message. He had a principle and a tactical line on this question which ruled out anything like a central organisation of the working class and its trade unions.

In the evolution of his philosophy, Gandhi came to realise very late the nature of the new society that India had established. He considered the new industrial society as an evil, one which ought to be destroyed and rebuilt on the model of something that was ancient India of handicrafts. One can find his thoughts on this question in his book *Hind Swaraj*, in which the modern means of production and hence social organisation had no place. He saw all the evil in the machine and not the social order of capitalism and its ownership of the means of production. Hence he wanted a restoration of the ancient Hindu varna system but without its castes or untouchability.

In such a conception, the working class was not a class but something akin to the sudra varna. It was his duty to labour and it was the duty of the owning rich to feed him and treat him well. Both had mutual duties towards each

other. Anyone who failed to observe his part had to be blamed and pressure brought on him to correct himself.

To Gandhi, the workers were not a class in the modern sense of the term, nor were the owners. But it did not mean that workers must not organise or go on strike for their just and rightful demands. So he defended the union of the Ahmedabad textile workers. And when he thought that the workers' demands were right and the millowners wrong, he defended their strikes also. Thus Gandhi was not against formation of a union or a strike.

For a strike, he laid down two absolute preconditions. One was that the demands must be just. Secondly, the workers must agree to submit them to arbitration. Strike was justified only if the owners refused arbitration. And who is to judge as a preliminary that the demands were just, if the employers rejected to put them to arbitration? Gandhi himself would judge and then decide whether the strike be supported or not.

His third tenet was that workers in one place and industry should not join their union in a common organisation with unions and workers in another place or trade. Such a combination would lead them into politics and violence. Unions must not do politics. Workers individually as citizens, as Indians, surely must support swaraj and the noncooperation movement. But only as individuals, i.e. as part of the Indian people. Hence they could join the Congress individually. But their union had no business to join in hartals or undertake political strikes. The moment they do that they become a class apart. It leads to evil and hence to violence.

Gandhi conducted two strikes of the Ahmedabad textile workers. He helped to build the Majoor Mahajan. But he did not want them to join the AITUC. He had not wanted the AITUC as such, as it would inevitably lead the workers into politics and class conflict. At the very moment he was calling the whole country on hartals, he did not want the workers to go on strike. But the workers did go on strike, much to his displeasure.

I do not want to go into all the aspects of Gandhi's approach on these vital questions, including his doctrine of treating capitalism as a system of trusteeship and the capitalist as a trustee of social wealth. Some people think that this principle of his negated private ownership by implication. I do not wish to go into this question here. This trusteeship is an old Hindu concept of the varna system and equilibrium of rights and obligations based on that system. It has nothing to do with the modern concept of negation of private property, i.e. capitalist property and class relations.

As history developed, Gandhi modified some of his earlier ideas. His disciples formed all-India organisations of unions and the only Gandhian concept they adhered to was insistence on compulsory arbitration and opposition to strike. His votaries today join international organisations also.

But here we are speaking of Mahatma Gandhi and the formation of the AITUC. From the above remarks, it is clear why he did not want to attend or send a message to the AITUC sessions, both at Bombay and Jharia.

Some might say that Gandhi had no time and was too busy with the noncooperation campaign. It may be pointed out that on 29 April 1920, he went and met Tilak at his Sinhagad residence, near Poona. In May 1920, he was conducting Ahmedabad textile workers' strike. There was arbitration and an award which the workers and some owners refused to accept. So politics had not prevented Gandhi from doing strike and trade-union work.

On 3 October, just four weeks before the Bombay session, "he presided over a meeting called by Subhani, Banker and Pawar to introduce NCO to the workers". The record says that the speakers were Gandhi, Shaukat Ali, Dr Savarkar, Ginwalla, D. R. Mayekar and others. All of these except Shaukat Ali were in the AITUC session.

It would not be out of place to quote here a record of his speech made in a meeting held to celebrate "Labour

Day” in Ahmedabad on 18 April 1920. He addressed the workers saying:

“They should cooperate with the millowners. They wanted a ten hours day but they should do more work than they were doing at present in twelve hours in those ten. They should have their union and disputes should be referred to arbitration. They must not go on strike and they must abide by the rules of their unions.”⁶³ The meeting was addressed by Seth Mangaldas Girdharilal, president of the Millowners’ Association, and by Ambalal Sarabhai.

Unfortunately by 3 May 1920 the spinners of Ahmedabad had gone on strike.

So if Mahatma Gandhi did not attend the Bombay session or welcome it, it was not because he was not near or was busy elsewhere or those who were preparing for the session were not in touch with him.

He was just not ready to approve of a central body of the workers’ trade unions.

Alongside this, one finds Gandhi saying the following on a report of a strike in the Fiji islands where Indian workers were held as slaves under the Indentured Labour Act:

“The *Morning Post* believes that the strike in Fiji was due to the efforts of a Sadhu sent there by me. Now I do not know who the alleged Sadhu is. I have certainly sent no one to Fiji to advise a strike. At the same time, the strike having been declared in Fiji, the strikers have my sympathy. All the evidence in my possession shows that Fiji is a huge exploitation camp in which the poor Indian labourers are used by the sugar planters for their fabulous profits.”⁶⁴

This was in regard to Fiji, outside India, where the European planters held the Indian workers as indentured slaves. Gandhi took up the cause of Champaran indigo peasants against their European masters. But such a state-

63. *Source Material*, Vol. III, p. 272.

64. Gandhi, *Works*, Vol. 19, p. 558—a Government of India publication.

ment did not come from him with regard to workers in India under Indian owners or even European owners. I do not know if he ever endorsed any of those big strikes that were raging at the time of the Bombay and Jharia sessions. But one need not pursue the subject more at this stage. The new working class in India was still a mysterious, highly explosive, powerful and unknown force to Gandhi. Even in Ahmedabad, where he had such an influence, he barred the workers from joining the political hartal called on 20 March 1920 as he was told by the authorities that the workers' participation would lead to violence!

This is enough to tell us why while Lokmanya Tilak had agreed to become the Vice-President of the AITUC Reception Committee, Mahatma Gandhi refused to have anything to do with it.

What would have happened if he had joined and tried to bring his tenets on the AITUC platform? At the Jharia session, where all the miners had gone on strike to join the AITUC session and was resounding with the slogans of "Mahatma Gandhi ki jai" and "Swaraj", what would Gandhi have done, if he had agreed to come? Would it have changed the Mahatma or the miners? It is my personal opinion that things would have turned for the better, if like Jawaharlal Nehru, C. R. Das and Subhas Bose, Gandhi had also taken part in shaping the AITUC. But this discussion be best postponed to the later sessions of the AITUC and the problems that it had to face then.

Meanwhile, the AITUC after its foundation session had adopted the following aims and objects:

"The object of the congress shall be to coordinate the activities of all the labour organisations in all the trades and in all provinces in India and generally to further the interests of Indian labour in matters social, political and economic."

There was not a word of revolution or socialism in this clause or in the constitution.

4. International Affiliation

The question of international affiliation of the AITUC has been a stormy subject throughout its history. As an international working class, it is inevitable and necessary for it to have international relations with its brothers everywhere and also to join in a common organisation on a world scale to defend its interests and fight its enemies.

The subject came up at the foundation session itself because some of the foreign delegates as, for example, from the British TUC and the Labour Party were eager to get India and its only central trade-union organisation in the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU). The IFTU was politically an adjunct of the Second International. During and after the war, the Second International had split on the question of support to the war and it had its effect on the IFTU also.

The IFTU requested the AITUC to affiliate to it,⁶⁵ but the matter was deferred to the Standing Committee (15 June 1921).⁶⁶

The differences and split in the IFTU (Amsterdam) was followed by the formation of the Red International of Labour Unions (RILU) with its headquarters in Moscow and bureaus and committees in various countries. The RILU supported the revolutionary movements of the peoples of the colonies for independence, while the IFTU, dominated

65. *Infra*, p. 6.

66. p. 155.

by the thinking of the British TUC and the reformist European organisations, had never supported the demands of the colonial peoples, not even the Home Rule demand of the Irish people or the demand for self-government of the Indian National Congress. In such conditions, it was difficult for the AITUC leadership of 1920-21 to join the IFTU and agree with the advice of the British delegates.

Very soon, however, Tom Mann and N. Watkins of the British Bureau of the RILU in London addressed a letter to the AITUC at Jharia. The letter is printed in the records⁶⁷ and was published in the *Bombay Chronicle* of 3 December 1921. The letter speaks for itself and we need not repeat its contents. It invited the AITUC to join in its congress to oppose the machinations of imperialism and its reformist supporters in the IFTU and the British TUC, which had failed to fight the India Office bureaucrats who prevented Horniman and Saklatvala from attending the AITUC session. The letter said, "A shortsighted labour movement of the past... permitted the slavery of western capitalism to be enforced upon the innocent, helpless human beings of the East and we have now all seen the result."⁶⁸

The AITUC did not affiliate to the RILU also or attend its sessions.

The leadership of the AITUC received a slap in the face by the British TUC session refusing to admit Horniman and Saklatvala, who had been elected AITUC delegates, to attend its congress.

Thus the AITUC remained unaffiliated both to the IFTU and the RILU.

And it continued to remain so till the year 1945, when the united World Federation of Trade Unions was formed, with all the world trade-union organisations including the British TUC in its fold. The AITUC joined the WFTU from its very foundation date.

We cannot pursue the history of our international affiliation in this place, beyond what appears in the records here.

The vicissitudes which befell to AITUC later on this question will be looked into when we come to that period. Whatever be the difficulties, internationalism and fraternal association and common action in unity with trade unions and with the world movement in some form or other is now an accepted tenet of all schools of thought in the trade-union movement, and neither the AITUC nor any trade-union organisation in India can opt out of it. As Lajpat Rai put it—we are a class and we are international. Hence every trade union in India upholds the slogan—“*Workers of the World, Unite!*”

• • •

The AITUC had become a fact. The Indian working class had forged a new weapon of its own, not only for itself and its own class tasks but also for participating in the anti-imperialist national-liberation movement of the whole country which, after the suppression of 1905-8, was now attaining new heights, with greater sweep and clarity of aims, with both national and international aspirations, fraternity and unity.

KREM Sanatorium

Marianska Lazni

Czechoslovakia

7 June 1973

FIRST INAUGURAL SESSION
ALL INDIA TRADE UNION
CONGRESS

Bombay,
31 October to 2 November 1920

Preliminary Note

Until the month of June 1920 labour was generally in an unorganised state in India. There were a few unions in existence. But generally speaking there was no mass movement towards organisation amongst the workers. The experience of the North Western Railway Strike of 1920 had shown that a lack of organisation among the mass of workers was not due either to their ignorance or to any innate inability to see the advantages of organised effort to better their condition.

The workers were ready for a mass movement towards organisation. But the idea had not been spread forcibly amongst them. They had no examples to follow. Their strikes in the past, as the Bombay Mill Strike of 1919, were carried on practically without any organisation and it speaks highly for their stability, their fellow feeling and their sense of justice of their cause that such strikes lasted as long as they did in spite of the workers' sufferings and their unorganised efforts. The time had surely come for an all-India movement and the opportunity was afforded by a comparatively trifling incident.

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONFERENCE

The government of India had made a nomination to the panel of the Commission of Inquiry under the International Labour Office without any reference to the workers of

India. This matter was taken up by Bombay workers who held a meeting in Parel on 7 July 1920 where the following resolutions were passed:

“That this meeting of the organised workers of Bombay and the delegates present protests against the unconstitutional nomination by the government of India of a representative of the workers of India to the International Labour Conference and the Commission of Inquiry in direct contravention of articles 389 and 412 of the League of Nations covenant and asserts the distinct right of the workers to elect their own representatives and advisers. In pursuance of the right given to workers this meeting urges the government to withdraw the nomination of Mr N. M. Joshi and send in his stead a duly elected representative of the organised workers of India.

“That this meeting resolves to hold an All-India Trade Union Congress in Bombay and elects Lala Lajpat Rai as the first President.”

CONGRESS

No sooner was this done than the work of organising the first session of the congress was taken in hand earnestly. A Reception Committee with 500 members was formed. The date fixed was 22 August. Lala Lajpat Rai was chosen as President. Messrs Baptista, Andrews, Brelvi, Lokamanya Tilak and Mrs Besant were chosen Vice-Presidents. Unfortunately this session had to be postponed to 31 October owing to the insufficiency of time. The congress which opened at the Empire Theatre* in Bombay in October was a stupendous success and went beyond our wildest expectations. Eight hundred and one delegates from all parts of India attended this session. Swami Viswananda with another delegate attended on behalf of the coalminers of

* Where the Empire Theatre stood, now stands the New Empire Theatre.

Bihar and Bengal. Sixty unions in all were definitely affiliated and 42 unions expressed their sympathy with and gave their support to the Trade Union Congress, but owing to one reason or another they were not able to send their delegates. From the lists attached it will be seen that workers practically from all parts of India were represented at the congress. The delegates of the miners came as representatives of two lakhs of workers. It will be seen that together with the miners and the sympathising unions the Trade Union Congress represents no less than 500,000 workers.

TUC OFFICE

The following departments were organised: Statistics Department, Publicity Department and Organising Department. Unfortunately lack of workers as well as means have handicapped us in the work of organisation. The magnitude of work taken in hand will be gauged by the statistics of strike and labour troubles with which we have had to deal during the past 12 months: (1) BPT Railway Strike, (2) Bombay Tramway Strike, (3) Oil Workers' Strike, (4) Mackenzie Saw Mills Strike, (5) Simplex Mill Strike, (6) Wallace Flour Mill Strike, (7) BB & CI Railway Workshop Strike, and numerous large and small strikes, all in Bombay.

Mr Joseph Baptista had also to deal with the Bombay Postal and Gas Workers' Strikes—involving in all about 60,000 workers. Except in a very few instances (notably the second Oil Workers' Strike, and the Postal and Gas Workers' Strikes) the workers have gained both in wages and in working conditions as a result of the negotiations carried on by Mr Joseph Baptista on their behalf. In fact, had it not been for Mr Joseph Baptista's able leadership and his unselfish labour in the cause of the Indian worker our task in Bombay would have been an exceedingly difficult one. The Tramway Strike was a bitter but successful

struggle such as to set an example of perseverance to the workers of the rest of India. Men stood firm in spite of every provocation and in spite of dastardly attacks on the men and their leaders which might have cost them their lives.

CENTRAL LABOUR FEDERATION, BOMBAY

Recently, a Central Federation for Bombay Presidency has been formed with a view to the centralisation of labour activity. The constitution will be found in the appendix.

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF TRADES UNIONS

We received an invitation to affiliate with this federation. The Amsterdam Federation also took up on our behalf the question of binding the Indian government as well as other governments to the provisions of the Peace Treaty article No. 393 according to which the organisations of workers must be consulted before nominations are made to the International Labour Conference. The fruits of this intervention have been seen in the acceptance by the government of India of the nominations made by us to the International Labour Conference. Mr N. M. Joshi goes to Geneva in place of Lala Lajpat Rai and has Mr Wadia as adviser. Mr Chaman Lall was unable to proceed in his capacity as adviser.

WORKERS' WELFARE LEAGUE FOR INDIA

These were appointed as our representatives in England. A deputation was promoted by this League to Mr Montagu in conjunction with the representatives of British labour with satisfactory results. The deputation referred to recent Madras affairs whereby injunctions as well as damages were sought against labour leaders by the employers. It also referred to the legislation of trade unions. Subse-

quently a conference of British labour was called by this League to discuss the Indian labour situation in reference to the resolution passed by our congress.

MEETINGS

Numerous meetings have been held under the auspices of the congress in Bombay. A meeting addressed by Colonel Wedgwood was attended by nearly 50,000 workers. Colonel Wedgwood came as a fraternal delegate from the British Trades Union Congress. Another meeting was addressed by Messrs Ben Spoor and Holford Knight. Previous to that an address was presented to the former by Mr Baptista on behalf of Bombay workers.

THE MOVEMENT IN INDIA

Mention must be made of a few important events in the history of the movement.

The *first* is the Madras Mill Strike and the subsequent attempt to penalise the leaders by obtaining injunctions against them and by filing suits for damages. This attempt to prevent the leaders from helping the men by invoking the aid of obsolete law outraged the conscience of all honest people. The cases, however, have been withdrawn.

The *second* is the recrudescence of the strike in Madras and the fostering of divisions amongst the workers who are leading absolutely terror-stricken lives. They have been on strike for months under the able leadership of Messrs E. L. Iyer, V. Chakarai, Kalyanasundaram Mudaliar, etc.

The *third* is the Oudh and Rohilkhand Railway Strike which was fought to a magnificent and successful conclusion by Mr J. B. Miller.

The *fourth* is the fight of Swami Viswananda for the coalminers of Bihar and Bengal.

Finally, the terrible tragedy of the coolies of the tea plantations which has elicited wide interest in many parts of the world.

NEXT CONGRESS

The next congress will be held in Jharia in November 1921. Mr Joseph Baptista has been elected by the Executive Committee to preside.

DRAFT CONSTITUTION

The draft constitution as approved and passed by the Executive Committee is appended.

D. CHAMAN LALL.

Proceedings of the First Session of the All India Trade Union Congress

TOWARDS INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD

The first Trade Union Congress of India opened its sessions at the Empire Theatre, Bombay, on Sunday, 31 October 1920, amid scenes of great enthusiasm. The theatre was crowded to its utmost capacity by delegates and visitors. The delegates who came from different parts of the country were present in large numbers representing practically all branches of labour in India. The attendance of members of the different trade unions in Bombay was of course the largest but representatives of labour in other parts of the country were also present in good numbers. And the members of the general public also attended in large numbers, the space reserved for visitors being fully occupied. The platform was equally crowded with members of the Reception Committee and other well-known citizens.

Lala Lajpat Rai, President of the congress, received a tremendous ovation on arrival and Colonel J. V. Wedgwood and Mr J. Baptista were also very cordially received by the assembly. Among those present, besides the President and the Chairman of the Reception Committee, were: Colonel and Mrs J. C. Wedgwood, Mrs Annie Besant, Mr and Mrs M. A. Jinnah, Pandit Motilal Nehru, the Hon

Mr Lalubhai Samaldas, Mr V. J. Patel, Mr Jamnadas Dwarkadas, Mr B. P. Wadia, Mr Miller, Mr S. A. Brelvi, Mr L. R. Tairsee, Mr Mavji Govindji, Mr Lalji Naranji, Mr B. F. Bharucha, Miss Joshi, Mrs Avantikabai Gokhale, Mr and Mrs D. Chaman Lall, Mr V. M. Pawar, Mr K. F. Nariman, Mr Hansraj P. Thackersey, Mr Lalubhai D. Javeri, Mr Chhaganlal P. Nanavati, Mr S. G. Banker, Mr Ahmed Haji Siddick Khatri, and others.

The proceedings commenced with the singing of labour songs, after which Mr Joseph Baptista, Chairman of the Reception Committee, made a speech welcoming the delegates. He was given a most enthusiastic reception on rising to address the assembly, and his speech evoked repeated applause.

Mr Baptista's Welcome Address

Brothers and Sisters, Delegates,

The high honour of welcoming you to the First All-India Trade Union Congress devolves upon me and I welcome you with feelings of much pleasure and pride. I can assure you that the originators of the idea of this congress, Mr Chaman Lall and Mr Pawar, and their collaborators have all been working with edifying energy and enthusiasm. Nevertheless, I anticipate that some of you will be subjected to discomfort and inconvenience. I must, therefore, request you to forgive our faults and overlook our shortcomings, and I am confident you will respond with customary oriental indulgence.

SOWING THE SEED

The agenda of business is not formidable, but the chief business of this congress will be to sow the seed, which like the proverbial mustard will germinate and grow into the mighty tree of the Federation of Labour in India, which we all desire. To nurse and water the seedling and sapling will be a labour of love for the Knights of Labour in India but their reward will be sweet. The supreme need of the moment is really for some light from the east to illumine the darkness of the west; for the humanising spiritualism of the east to chasten the brutalising materialism of the west. I believe we can achieve this object by the

power and principles of organised labour in India. Among labourers, I include the hewer of wood and drawer of water and the tiller in the fields. These too ought to be the chief objects of solicitude for the state. This has never been denied in theory by any government, ancient or modern, but it has never been enforced in practice by the governing classes.

The *via dolorosa* for the labourer has been slavery, serfdom, or indentures or statutes of labour, combination laws and similar beds of roses. The emancipation of labour from this oppressive system is not yet fully attained as our own people are experiencing in some parts of the world christian governments. But even where there are no indenture conditions or combination laws, labour is dominated by capital. Capitalists have ceased to buy slaves, but they still buy labour, and pay for it according to the eternal and infernal law of demand and supply. This idea of buying is the root of the evil. Till it is eradicated and supplanted by the higher idea of partnership the well-being of the workers will never be secured. They are partners and coworkers and not buyers and sellers of labour. They are all engaged in promoting the well-being of the society. Capital does not buy or employ labour. Society is the ideal we must strive to achieve through good and evil report. Without the political power of the purse and the law-maker we cannot go far, but we can go a good way towards the goal by the power of unions, strikes and boycotts.

UNIONS

There are no combination laws in India to render unions criminal conspiracies, but there are a few individuals who denounce them as bulwarks of Bolshevism and anarchy. Such madcaps once existed in England as well, and it was only after a long struggle between capital and unions that they realised that unions substituted reason for violence in collective bargaining. I have no doubt that antagonism will

soon give way to a more reasonable frame of mind. But after the decree of the League of Nations, government ought to abandon their attitude of benevolent neutrality and legislate for the compulsory recognition of the right of association for lawful objects to give effect to the decree of the League of Nations.

I am inclined to agree with Sir Thomas Holland that the officials of any labour union ought to be recruited from their own class, but in the absence of primary education and the practice of victimisation this appears to be a counsel of perfection outside the pale of practical politics. In fact I am not quite sure that the want of education does not make these associations premature. We are, I have no doubt, experimenting a combination of officials consisting of insiders and outsiders! But I have no doubt that for the present unions would be farces without outsiders. The workman knows where the shoe pinches and can state his demands with emphasis. He feels he is right, but cannot justify them by facts or figures or arguments. I had a remarkable illustration of this in the lock-out of the Petroleum Company.

One of the demands of the men was a change of the system of piece-work into daily wages at the rate of Rs 1-8-0* per diem for which they offered to do 200 solderings a day. But they could not assign any reason for limiting it to 200. They admitted that some of them under the inducement of piece-work soldered 300 to 500 tins; but they insisted that 200 was the right number. I met the agents with some fear and trembling. They thought that 200 was ridiculously low. They thought that 400 was nearer the mark. They reduced it to 300, but would not hear even of the golden mean between 200 and 300. Here was a deadlock. The existing rate was a bit of a chinese puzzle, i.e., 7 annas per 100 plus 60 per cent plus 1½ anna per day. But this rate meant exactly Rs 1-8-0 for 200 tins according

* This amounts to the present-day Rs 1.50.

to the calculation made by W. Johnson of the Standard Oil Company. But if this was the fact why should they insist in the future on 300 when they paid Rs 1-8-0 for 200 at present?

The agents readily recognised the reasonableness of the limitation and the solution was simplified and we were able to combine a system of daily wage with piece-work. But here were masters of experience on one side and men of experience on the other side—masters regarding the men as strikers for limiting the figure to 200 and men regarding the masters as hard taskmasters for exacting more than 200. I believe the presence of a political lawyer whom employers delight to defeat on account of his ignorance contributed to the termination of the strike the prolongation of which for one more day would have compelled many mills in Bombay to cease working altogether, thus aggravating the dangers of the breach of the peace. Lawyers are not quite so bad as the bureaucrats who believe they can do things better than people. Bombay got peace, the companies got contented men and the men got benefit of a compound system which secured the minimum of Rs 1-8-0 a day even when business was slack and owners had not enough work for output of 200 tins per man.

STRIKES AND BOYCOTTS

Having combined themselves into a union and failing to obtain any legitimate demand or to redress any serious grievance the unions can use the weapons of strikes and boycotts to enforce their demands. Unions should of course precede strikes. My experience in Bombay is that strikes precede unions in most cases. This is like putting the cart before the horse—*Agal gharri, piche ghoda!* It is like digging a well for water after the house was on fire. It makes a world of difference which is first—George or Lloyd. We

shall have Lloyd George or George Lloyd*—Premier or Pro-Consul (*laughter*).

Nobody challenges the legitimacy of strikes now-a-days; but boycott is not recognised as legitimate in every case. Boycotts are either simple or compound like fractures of bone. In America bills have been promoted to make boycotts legal; but we have not yet educated the world regarding it as we have educated them regarding strikes. Boycotts are expensive to the masters for the men work while customers abstain. I read boycotts have been successfully used in America against profiteering, especially in the daily necessities of life. The most powerful weapon is of course simultaneous use of strike and boycott except in the case of post office. In the post office while the strike is on they do not want letters posted. If there are no letters to be delivered the officials can say "All's well". Therefore in the case of postal strikes instead of boycotts there ought to be a large crop of letters. We have a postal strike in Bombay and I want all my friends and foes who wish to help the poor to get his daily bread to inundate Bombay with millions of letters. The postal heart is hard at present. These millions may melt the heart.

Although strikes are legal I find the capitalists in Bombay look upon this struggle for bread as if it was the Battle of Waterloo. More than 25 years ago an economist called it "a peculiar method of doing business". And I agree with him that negotiations for ending a strike should be conducted on business principle if we mean to act honestly in the struggle for bread and not make it a mere occasion for trying strength.

In all the strikes with which I was or am concerned the capitalists, from the director-general and others, made the strike the occasion for trying their strength. I cannot sufficiently condemn this method. It is mean and cowardly for

* Sir George Ambrose Lloyd was the Governor of Bombay and Mr Lloyd George was the British Prime Minister.

the strong to beat the weak. "A grain of sense is better than a grain of gunpowder." The only exception I found was the Petroleum Company and in this case the lock-out lasted only five days.

In Bombay stupid notions of prestige have warped the judgment of men and it makes them demand unconditional surrender. In one case in Bombay at present they secretly offer fairly acceptable terms, but they insist on proclaiming it as unconditional surrender instead of calling it amicable settlement. Personally though a great failure as a strike manager, I would in the interest of peace and order go to the length of accepting such unconditional surrender if I had guarantees that this was not a method of strike-breaking. The post and telegraph men were once deceived by a promise of an extra Rs 10. The man who made it never denied it. Unfortunately, the manager having gone on leave, his successors found no trace of it for six months.

COERCION AND STARVATION

I have had no experience of any strike in England, but in Bombay we are confronted with coercion and starvation. Poverty on one side and policemen on the other. Recently we had a reign of "danda", Pathans with dandas fraternising with policemen for protecting the property of companies, but breaking bones of strikers and their friends. They nearly sent me to purgatory or hell* as well as Messrs Chaman Lall, Pawar and others who were with me at the time. Fortunately our heads were saved.

I also find the police courts used as strike-breakers by false charges supported by perjuries. One of the magistrates deems it his duty to send the so-called offenders to jail imagining it as the promoting of peace and order but actually promoting breaking of peace by exasperating the strikers who see an innocent man sent to jail. The postal

* This refers to the assault on Mr Baptista a few days earlier, when he was returning from a meeting.

strikers are a model for the world for their peaceful behaviour; yet one of them was sent to jail after 36 days of peaceful strike. The police declined to take up the case on the ground that the assaulted man was not a public servant and let the striker off referring the aggrieved to the court of law. But postal officials insisted and the police commissioner yielded holding he was a public servant. The magistrate held that he was not a public servant and gave the innocent man two months' rigorous imprisonment.

These are the ways of employers in Bombay. Neither government nor companies will discuss the merits of the men's demands. Their idea is not to do justice, but break the strike, and they are assisted by Anglo-Indian papers with all the skill of strike-breakers, with all the venom of serpents and with all the lies in creation. To make matters worse, we have to deal with seducers. Some loyalists come to strikers and go back to bring a false charge of intimidation. Even when masters are negotiating with me they have tried to seduce strikers behind my back. In one case they succeeded with about 60 Moslems. A policeman did the dirty job. These men had taken the most binding oath that they would stand by one another. That oath was broken. One should have thought that no man of honour would have stooped to conquer by demoralising the oath-breakers. Yet such things are done in Bombay. I beg of Comrade Wedgwood to cable to the Labour Party and move the Cabinet to cast a few glances at what is going on in Bombay. The local officials and managers have hardened their hearts like Pharaoh.

RIGHTS OF LABOUR

I have dealt with the methods which labour must or may employ to get their dues. I will not enter into the question of what are the rights of labour. These will no doubt occupy your attention. I shall make only a few general observations. The first thing that occurs to me is Christ's

injunction: "Go thou sluggard and learn wisdom from the ant." This means no bread, no work. The idlers should get no bread, but the rich, they toil not nor do they spin, but they reap all the fruits of labour. The question is how to secure for the labourers the full fruits of his labour. Profit-sharing has been suggested as the simplest and best method; but I think excess profits ought to go to the labourer. Anything above 9 per cent ought to be considered excess profits. Whatever it is, the time has come when the workman will get his bread and the piece of the cake as well. I need not say that I wish them all success in their great struggle for securing their birth right and full fruits of their labour.

Election of President

Mr B. P. Wadia (Madras) proposing the election of Lala Lajpat Rai to the presidential chair, said the congress was to his mind the most important event in the modern political life of India. They were gathered together there for the First Session of the All-India Trade Union Congress, and the work that would take place not only during the two days but during the months to follow would mark their career as a body either reasonable enough to guide Indian labour along the right path, or bring it to disaster as the consequence of wrong guidance proceeding on wrong principles. Success or failure of the movement would depend entirely on the wisdom of the leaders who directed that movement and the principles which guided its activities. On such an occasion the man whom they should have as president must not only be one in whom they had confidence as a politician but also a man who loved the masses of this great country, whose rights must be regarded by him irrespective of party politics, or political movements in the country.

Lala Lajpat Rai (*cheers*) was undoubtedly a man of this description, and the speaker was convinced that the Lalaji would guide their movement in the right way, and unless this was done, the questions of agricultural labour, factory labour or the coolie working on plantations and the worker in the mines could not be successfully and properly solved. Lala Lajpat Rai with his unique experience as a president

of the Indian National Congress, as a social worker, and as a patriot would be able to protect their interests from time to time. He would be able to put forward the demand and requests of the Indian Labour Party not only before the government of India but also before the government of Great Britain. His work in America and in Europe spoke for itself, and in selecting the name of Lala Lajpat Rai (*cheers*) for the presidentship of the congress, they would agree with him, they were taking the right course while inaugurating a movement which had great possibilities for the good of the poorer population of this country (*hear, hear*).

COMBINE WITH LABOUR IN OTHER PARTS

Mr N. M. Joshi (Bombay) seconding the resolution said, Mr Wadia had already explained to them the importance of the congress. They should have on such an occasion a president who would be able to lay the sound foundation of this and allied movements and, as Mr Wadia had explained already, the President-elect was the fittest person for that office, for the Lalaji was one of the most prominent figures in Indian politics and public life. He was not a mere politician whose love of freedom for the workers was well-known. His sympathies were not, as they would all be convinced, narrow. He was a broadminded man. He had worked for the depressed classes and for the elevation of women and the working classes. He was also a man who believed in the equality of man. It was such a man that they required as their president, and they were fortunate in getting the Lalaji to occupy the chair. He, however, wished to tell them that while labour had come into its own it should not confine its activities to one country alone because then it would not be able to achieve its end. It must combine with labour in other parts of the world. It must internationalise itself.

It was unfortunate that in this country at this time it was necessary that the labour movement should be led by

men who were not themselves labourers in the strict sense of the term. But there was no help to it situated as they were at present. This fact put a great responsibility upon the leaders of labour at present, for all the consequences of the rules that they passed and the activities that they started would not fall upon them, but upon others. Therefore their responsibility in carrying on that movement was very great indeed and for that reason also a president of the experience of Lala Lajpat Rai was absolutely necessary and they were very fortunate in having him as their President.

Mr Miller of the North-Western Railway further supported the resolution.

Mr D. Chaman Lall, further supporting the resolution, said they could not have found in the whole of India a man more fitted than Lala Lajpat Rai to preside over the deliberations of a Labour Congress. The Lala had been asked to preside at the first session of this Trade Union Congress not simply because he was an eminent leader of public opinion in India or because he had the high distinction of being an ex-President of their great national assembly, the Indian National Congress, but principally because he was heart and soul with the cause of the working classes of this country. It would have been little use their having a man as their President who, however eminent, had not that real sympathy with labour which Lala Lajpat Rai had.

Continuing Mr Chaman Lall said, Indian labour had now woken from its sleep of centuries (*cheers*) and it would wake up India (*cheers*). But in this connection he wished to tell them one thing and it was that the time had now come when they should give up nationalism and go for internationalism. They should look upon labourers all over the world as their comrades. Those only were their enemies who, whilst filling their own pockets with the fruits of the workers' labour, starved those that produced the fruits. Indian labour would succeed when it united and made this

congress a success. The employers of labour would then understand that Indian labour had at last awakened from its centuries-long slumber (*cheers*).

A workman's delegate further supported the resolution, which was carried with acclamation, the whole assembly standing and giving their hearty cheers for the Lalaji.

Mr Baptista then garlanded Mr Lajpat Rai amid renewed cheering.

The President, on rising to deliver his address, received another big ovation, the cheering lasting some minutes, and the assembly repeatedly cheered quite a number of points in his address.

Presidential Address

Mr Baptista, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Permit me to thank you from the bottom of my heart for the honour you have done me by asking me to preside over this first session of the All-India Trade Union Congress.

It is a unique occasion, the first of its kind even in the history of this ancient country of ours. In her long history extending over thousands of years, India has surely seen many a great gathering in which parts of this vast sub-continent and all classes of its population were represented, gatherings at which were discussed and settled important and nice questions of religion, philosophy, grammar, law and politics, gatherings in which foreign scholars and foreign ambassadors and foreign diplomats took part. But history records no instance of an assemblage that was convened solely to consider the interests and welfare of workers not of this city or that, not of this province or that, but of Bharatvarsha as a whole.

Even under British rule we have had all-India gatherings of various kinds, political, religious, social, literary, scientific, etc., etc., but never an all-India meeting of the workers of the country or one where people assembled to consider the interests and the present and future welfare of the workers as such. This by itself should show, if there was nothing else to remind us of the fact, that the India of today is very different from the India of ancient and

medieval times, nay even from the India of yesterday. We are living in an age quite different from anything that the world has seen or known before. That being so, the problems that face and the questions that confront us are, from the very nature of things, of a different kind from those that confronted our immediate and remote ancestors. This fact, whether we like it or not, has to be recognised.

NATIONAL ISOLATION IMPOSSIBLE

Then there is another fact also which receives scant attention from those who profess to guide the destinies of this great nation, viz that we are living in times in which no nation can live an isolated life of its own. Whatever happens in the world outside of our shores affects us in our daily life very closely and intimately. It makes our food dearer, our clothing more costly, our possession more or less valuable and similarly affects other relations of life very deeply. In the same way whatever happens in our country affects the outside world also equally deeply and intimately. This is not limited to any single sphere of life but is virtually true of almost all spheres, but particularly so of the political and economic. So, whether we like it or not, we are a part and parcel of the modern world.

This modern world is characteristically a world of machinery, of steam, gas and electricity. This is a world of mass production, of organised capital, organised industry and organised labour. Organised mass production involves the organisation of capital and the organisation of labour on a scale never heard of before. So far, organised capital had its way. It has ruled the world for the last 150 years, and the world today is groaning under its burden. It has destroyed many an old civilisation, enslaved religion, chained science and placed in bondage all the forces of nature and human intellect. Humanity is its bond slave.

Old China with its four to five hundred millions of industrious, hard-working and art-loving peoples, with its

ancient culture, science and art, has been broken on the wheel and thrown to the wolves. India with its hoary civilisation, its mighty spiritualism, its great philosophy and its beautiful art, with a family consisting a one-fifth of the whole human race, has also been bled white by the forces of organised capital and is today lying prostrate at its feet. Militarism and imperialism are the twin children of capitalism; they are one in three and three in one. Their shadow, their fruit and their bark, all are poisonous. It is only lately that an antidote has been discovered and that antidote is organised labour.

INDIA'S ECONOMIC BONDAGE

We in India have been rather slow to find and apply this antidote. The reasons are obvious. We are politically impotent and economically helpless. Our political impotence has made us a nation of pariahs in relation to the rest of the world. Our masters used us to conquer and police the world for their benefit and glorification. They also used us to develop their colonies, cultivate their fields, operate their mines, man their industries, and increase their wealth. By way of adding insult to injury they maligned our religion, caricatured and painted us so black as to be considered unfit for being accepted as equals or even as men by the so-called civilised races of the world.

In the eyes of the latter, we are a nation of coolies, inferior in everything that distinguishes a mere animal from man. This was a trick by which organised British capital managed to create a prejudice against us in the minds of the white workers of Europe, America and Africa. It was necessary for their purpose. Any bond of brotherhood or of mutual interest between the workers of Europe and America, on the one hand, and those of Asia on the other would have destroyed the spell by the force of which they exploited and sweated both. To the workers of Manchester was always presented the bugbear of the cheap

labour of India. We in India were kept in fear of the competition of Manchester.

The war however has broken the spell. The workers of Europe and America have now discovered that the cause of the workers is one and the same all the world over, and that there can be no salvation for them unless and until the workers of Asia were organised, and internationally affiliated. Labour in Europe threatens to turn the tables against their masters, the employers, and they recognise that the success of their movement demands a close association of European workers with the workers of Asia.

So long as there is cheap labour in China and India, and so long as India is helpless to keep out foreign capital and to prevent the latter using Indian and Chinese labour to the detriment of the European workers, the cause of the European proletariat is neither safe nor secure. The movement we are inaugurating today is thus of more than national importance. It is a matter of international significance.

The workers of India are joining hands and brains not only to solidify the interests of Indian labour, but also to forge a link in the chain of international brotherhood. The future is on the laps of god and prophecy is unsafe but it may be safely predicted that the success of the movement to which we are giving birth today may eventually turn out to be an event of world importance.

GENESIS OF INDIAN TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

The trade union movement in this country is yet in its infancy and it may be said that an All-India Trade Union Congress is rather premature. In my humble judgment, it has not come a day too soon. Labour in India suffers from very many drawbacks and the prejudices against it are too many and varied in nature. Depressed by religio-social ideals of bygone ages, looked down upon by prevailing standards of literary education, deprived even of elemen-

tary knowledge by the extravagant wastefulness and callousness of a foreign bureaucracy, placed in a condition of abject dependence by the military exigencies of a capitalistic autocracy, kept apart by the artfulness of resourceful despotism, labour in this country is in greater need of joint action and of freedom from provincial and district rivalries than anywhere else. (District organisations cannot be effective unless they are protected from the rivalry of men from the other districts. For this purpose are needed provincial organisations, but even provincial organisations will not do unless we have an all-India organisation to protect labour from provincial rivalries)

The two employers of labour in our country are the government and the private capitalist. The government also is, in its own way, a big capitalist. The departments of railways, post office, telegraph and canals and others are capitalistic and more or less commercial concerns. Both these classes of employers have all-India resources at their disposal. Handicapped as labour is in many other respects, labour also must have an all-India organisation and all-India propaganda to meet its opponents on equal ground.

EXTRAVAGANCE OF THE GOVERNMENT

The government of this country is wasteful and extravagant in the salaries and allowances it allows to its higher services. It would be bankrupt if it met the demands of the subordinate services and lowest rank of its employees also in the same spirit. Consequently, to avoid bankruptcy, it sweats its lowest services in the way as perhaps no other government on the face of the earth does. There is no country in the world which pays its higher civil and military services anything like the salaries the government of India does. In the whole of the United States there is only one man who gets more than 35,000 rupees per annum, and that is the President of the United States. In Japan even the Prime Minister does not get that amount. In India there

are dozens, mostly Englishmen, who get more than that amount. Compare the salaries post by post, and you will find the standard extravagantly higher in India while the living even now is comparatively cheaper. Yet, within the last two or three years the government has sanctioned enormous increases in these salaries.

The worst feature of this situation, however, is the extreme disparity that exists between the salaries of the lowest services and those of the highest. The difference between maximum and minimum salaries in the United States and Great Britain on the one hand, and India on the other is simply startling. In the United States the lowest salary allowed to a clerk or a porter in government office is from about 1,000 to 1,200 dollars a year, and the highest allowed to a cabinet minister is 12,000. In India a cabinet minister gets 80,000 rupees a year besides allowances, while his orderly gets only 120 rupees a year, or at the most 180. In calculating the needs of a civil servant, the government of India shows a great deal of generosity, provides for the education of his children, for the luxury of travelling to and from Europe, and secures him a high standard of comfort in India. But when it enters into calculation for ascertaining the proper salary of a postman or a telegraph peon or signaller, it not only disregards all these considerations, but is mean enough to bring into account the earnings of his wife and his minor children (*shame*).

Such is the difference between man and man in the eyes of this christian government. That there is difference between mere manual work and skilled work, between skilled work and higher brain work, may be assumed but is the difference so great as to justify this disparity between the economic needs of one from other? To fight against such a system of inhuman inequalities the workers of India, whether in government or in private employ, require an all-India organisation to help each other by mutual sympathy, counsel and aid.

Again, there is another danger ahead against which workers in India must provide. We are often told that in order successfully to compete with Manchester and Japan, capital in India should be allowed a high rate of profit and cheap labour is a necessity for the purpose. The interests of Indian industries, they say, require that labour in this country should be plentiful and cheap. There may be something in that argument, but the way in which it is represented in season and out of season carried it too far. We are not prepared to admit the validity of this plea. Under the shelter of nationalism European capitalists have created sufficient havoc in the world, and we are not prepared to listen with equanimity to that cry being overdue in India. An appeal to patriotism must affect the rich and the poor alike, in fact, the rich more than the poor.

NOT AT THE EXPENSE OF LABOUR

If the development of the Indian industries requires the organisation of Indian capital, it still more requires the organisation of Indian labour. Labour and capital must meet on equal ground and join hands to develop Indian industries. As at present neither the government nor the capitalist is disposed to treat the worker fairly and equally. The former sacrifices him at the altar of princely salaries for a higher rank of the European and Indian services and also for the exigencies of militarism. The capitalist wants to sweat him for his hundred or two hundred per cent profit. Surely, that is not the way to develop Indian industries if it is to be done at the expense of labour alone.

I maintain, therefore, that it has become absolutely necessary for Indian labour to organise itself on national lines in order to be able to negotiate with their employers on equal terms and with due regard to national interests. I refuse to admit that the interests of Indian industries must in every case, override the human needs of workers. In all discussion about the demands and rights of labour in India,

labour is still treated as a commodity to be sold and purchased in open market. In every discussion it is the interests of industry that are held supreme. The question asked is: "Will the industry bear it?" The proper question in my judgment should be: "How can the industry be made to bear it consistently with the minimum human requirements of the worker and his family, on the standard of a moderately comfortable healthy life for him and his children, a provision for the education of the latter and for the rainy day?"

The Indian capitalists must meet labour half way and must come to an understanding with it on the basis of sharing the profits in a reasonable and just proportion. It must be made worth the while for labour to cooperate with the capitalist to advance and develop Indian industries.

If however Indian capital wants to ignore the needs of labour and can think only of its huge profits, it should expect no response from labour and no sympathy from the general public. If labour must remain half-starved, ill-clothed, badly housed, and destitute of education, it can possibly have no interest in the development of Indian industries, and all appeals in the name of patriotism must fail.

On these grounds and several others it is desirable that Indian labour should lose no time to organise itself on a national scale. Capital is organised on a worldwide basis; it is backed up by a financial and political strength beyond conception; its weapons are less perishable than those employed by labour; it presents dangers which apply universally. In order to meet these dangers Indian labour will have to join hands with labour outside India also, but its first duty is to organise itself at home.

The most important business then before this congress is to bring into existence a central organisation which would protect the interests of labour all over India. The organisation cannot be perfected without bringing all the unions in India into its orbit of influence. But a beginning

can certainly be made with as many organisations as are willing to join hands at once. Those who are pioneers must exercise patience, tolerate criticism and show readiness to subordinate individual opinions and predilections to the interests of the general body of workers in such a way as to convince those that are hesitating and faltering of their sincerity and earnestness.

It is easy to criticise, it is sometimes convenient to stay out till the pioneers have cleared the field and borne the brunt of opposition. It is even prudent to take no risk involved in going ahead with a movement of this kind. But it is neither manly nor patriotic to do so. Anyway, the pioneers must proceed in a spirit of brotherhood, working for all, in the interests of all, and always willing to share the gains with all.

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONFERENCE

The other important business before the congress will be to consider the resolutions of the International Labour Conference, created by the League of Nations, which held its first sitting at Washington D.C. in November 1919, and to express its considered opinion relating thereto. The congress will also have to select its accredited representatives to represent them in the coming conference, and to place its views before that body. Our past experience is that the government of India, however well-intentioned some of its individual officers and statesmen may be, is, because of its constitution, capitalistic in its sympathies and outlook. It protects further the interests of British capital in the first instance, and then proceeds to help Indian capital, so far as the latter does not encroach on the preserves of the former.

Its professed concern for labour and for the poor is rarely translated into deeds. It is well illustrated today by its attitude towards the lowest among its servants, by its continued and unashamed tolerance of forced labour, by its half-hearted sympathy for Indian labour in colonies and

by its indifference towards the education of the labourer and his children. The government of India will do nothing substantial for the Indian people, the vast bulk of whom are labourers in the field and factory, unless and until it is compelled to do so by the force of circumstances. In bringing about these circumstances, Indian labour must play its part and secure the sympathy of international labour. It is therefore of vital importance that Indian labour should cultivate the most friendly relations with European labour without necessarily adopting all the items in the planks of the latter.

While it is true that the interests of labour are the same all the world over, it is equally true that the power of labour in each country is limited by local and national circumstances. Labour in Europe is in a position to dictate. European workmen have found out that to depend for the enforcement of their right and the amelioration of their condition on the political action of persons who owe their legislative power and position to the vote of men of property is absurd and unnatural. In order to protect the interests of himself and his class, the workman must have a vote and he must give it to a man of his class or to a man pledged to his interests. So every workman in Europe is a political unit. Over and above this, European labour has found another weapon in direct action. On the top comes the Russian worker, who aims to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat.

We, in India, have not yet reached even the first stage. The government have not yet given us votes. As at present situated, they will oppose us at every step. They will not even hesitate to use all the forces of militarism at their command to crush our efforts towards united action and to keep us disunited, unorganised and out of touch with world affairs. They have illustrated this by their action in the matter of the Lahore Railway Strike, the Government Press Strike at Calcutta and Simla and the Postal and Telegraph Strike in Bombay.

Their recent action in prohibiting the importation of *Soviet Russia* and the *Daily Herald* of London is also an illustration to the point (*shame*). While the Anglo-Indian press is engaged day and night in disseminating palpable lies about Soviet Russia, the government of India steps in to prevent the people of India from knowing the other side of the story. Truth in Europe is of two kinds: (a) capitalistic and governmental truth represented by men like Mr Winston Churchill and papers like the *London Times* and the *Morning Post* and (b) socialistic and labour truth represented by labour organs of the type of *Justice*, *Daily Herald* and *Soviet Russia*.

“TRUTH IS NO LONGER TRUTH”

The government of India wants us to swallow the first kind of truth without knowing the other side. Unfortunately for us truth is no longer truth. It is qualified by capitalism and imperialism on the one hand, and socialism on the other. It is either capitalistic or bourgeois or socialistic. In order to know the whole truth one has to know all the three brands and then use his judgment. My own experience of Europe and America leads me to think that socialistic, even Bolshevik truth is any day better, more reliable and more human than capitalistic and imperialistic truth.

The Anglo-Indian press takes its cue from the latter now-a-days; it divides its attention between Bolshevism and Gandhism. It stops at nothing when it sits to misrepresent, malign and discredit. It is helped in that nefarious work by the action of the government. Whatever may be the case of the government against *Soviet Russia*, its action against *Justice* and *Daily Herald*, both British publications, is absolutely arbitrary, unjust and provoking. The people of India are not babies who require protection against the kind of mental and moral food supplied by the labour publications of Great Britain.

The experience of the few strikes we had in Bombay,

Madras, Lahore and Calcutta, proves beyond the shadow of a doubt that our workers are much more disciplined and self-controlled than the corresponding ranks of labour in Great Britain, United States, France or Germany. In Lahore 50,000 railwaymen kept up a strike for about seven weeks without having one case of violence or injury to property. Even the capitalists admired their manner and method. The people of India are probably the most law-abiding people on earth, and if any government uses repression against them it only betrays its own weakness. What makes the people of India law-abiding is not the existence of fear of coercion and laws, but their own innate and inborn gentleness and goodness.

There must be something rotten in the constitution and nature of a government which needs martial law and military terrorism to keep such people in hand and to preserve order among them. The action of the government of India in preventing access to the people of India to the socialistic and labour thought of the world is the least justifiable of all its repressive actions and should be unreservedly condemned (*cheers*).

NEW STANDARDS OF LABOUR

There is no one in India who believes that the European and Russian standards of labour can be applied to the India of today. If there were any I would remind him or them of the message of Lenin to Bela Kun, wherein the former warned the latter against the danger of applying Russian standard to Hungary prematurely. For the present our greatest need in this country is to organise, agitate and educate. We must organise our workers, make them class conscious and educate them in the ways and interests of commonweal.

I do not believe in freedom by steps or by stages, but at the same time I do not believe in denying the facts of life and shutting our eyes to the circumstances under which we

live. If one is both chained and handcuffed, one can break one's handcuffs and yet not be free. Labour in this country has many fetters to break through. They will require time and energy, application and organisation, self-discipline and self-control to do so. But they will not be free unless all the fetters are broken and thrown asunder. For this purpose all concerned in the welfare of labour will have to work hard and in a spirit of sacrifice and cooperation.

This spirit of sacrifice should particularly characterise the efforts of such brain workers in the ranks of labour who are educated enough to lead the movement. Those who are not strictly wage-earners but who feel for labour will have to give their time, talent and money for the improvement of the wage-earners' lot. The government and the capitalist will both try to discredit them but they must stand by the faith in them, and ungrudgingly give the best in them to the cause of labour, which is the cause of humanity. Pretending to protect the interests of labour, the government does not like the interference of those who are not actually wage-earners themselves in the organisation. Unskilled labour is incompetent to fight its own battles and can easily be made to yield in negotiations between them and their educated, resourceful and wide awake opponents. The workers should not fall into this trap. For some time to come they need all the help and guidance and cooperation they can get from such among the intellectuals as are prepared to espouse their cause. Eventually labour shall find its leaders from among its own ranks.

CONCLUSIONS

I do not think I should detain you, Ladies and Gentlemen, more than a minute. In this minute I want to explain our attitude towards government. It is neither one of support nor that of opposition. We will welcome every effort by government to improve the cause of labour and help to organise and establish themselves on a basis of self-support

and self-reliance. I have already explained that we cannot expect much from the government as constituted at present, and I fear that we cannot place much reliance upon it. But there may be individual statesmen to whom we may appeal in emergencies for mediation between the capitalist and labour. But the question is: Who is going to mediate between the government and its own servants where the question of the improvement of the latter's lot is involved and the government is unwilling to do so, on a proper scale? The situation becomes very different under these circumstances. We will have to find a *modus operandi* to relieve it.

With these words I will again thank you for the honour you have done me and for the patience with which you have heard me.

Messages from British Labour

After the Presidential speech was over Mr Chaman Lall read out letters and cablegrams, expressing sympathy with the object of the congress, from Mr George Lansbury, editor of the *Daily Herald*, the Transport Workers' Federation, the Irish Trades Union Congress, representing 300,000 workers, the Irish Women Workers' Union and other labour unions of Great Britain and Ireland. Mr Chaman Lall said these messages had come through the Workers' Welfare League for India and as the result of the activities of Mr Saklatvala.

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At the resumed sitting the next day, the proceedings were interrupted and the following resolution was put from the chair and carried amidst deep silence, the whole assembly standing:

"That this congress consisting of the representatives of 97 trade unions and speaking in the name of the workers of India places on record its sense of irreparable loss which the country has suffered by the death of Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak, one of the Vice-Presidents of the congress, who had always sympathised with and furthered the cause of Indian labour."

FRATERNAL GREETINGS TO COL. WEDGWOOD

Then the following resolution was next moved from the chair:

“That this congress extends fraternal greetings to Colonel Wedgwood, who is attending this congress as the fraternal delegate from the British Labour Party.”

The President, putting the resolution to the meeting, said the British Isles possessed no truer friend of India than Col. Wedgwood (*cheers*). The Colonel loved India not because it was a part of the British empire or of the world, but because it was entitled to as much freedom as any part of that empire or of the world. He assured Col. Wedgwood that his name at the present moment was a household word throughout India (*applause*). All India that could read and write and all people interested in the affairs of this country knew him at least by name and appreciated his work (*applause*).

There was one more reason why they loved him, and it was that they wanted to prove to the world that they were not haters of the British people (*hear, hear*), and that they sometimes spoke strongly not because they were British or christian, but because some of them who were in authority exploited or oppressed the people of this country. He would assure Col. Wedgwood and the British public that they disliked those among themselves who exploited and oppressed them as much as they disliked the others. He was free to confess and he believed in his heart of hearts that the British were the first nation in the world (*cheers*). They were very able and conciliating and of a high character, yet very subtle. At home they were democratic. But by the way in which they administered and treated their dependency—not their colonies—they had quite deserved all that they said of them (*hear, hear*).

He might tell them once for all that there were very good and noble-minded Englishmen among the services. They knew them and valued them, but as instruments of the bureaucracy which they served and as instruments of their nation, they advanced their interests; and it was their bounden duty to protect themselves against the exploiting policy which they pursued. Indians would do that, not out

of the slightest bit of race hatred but in defence of their rights (*cheers*).

He wanted the Colonel to take it from him that they were anxious to remain friendly to the British (*cheers*) and they wanted to remain part of the British Commonwealth, if not out of altruistic, then for selfish reasons. But at the same time he must tell him that whether they harmed themselves or not they were determined to pursue their own way (*applause*). They had many trusted friends among Englishmen, whose advice they valued and followed. They had placed implicit faith practically for the last fifty years in the words and pledges of English statesmen (*applause*).

They knew that the British workers were their sincere friends because the cause of the one was practically the cause of the other, but for some time they were determined to follow their own policy and to carry on their campaign in their own way. They hoped for that reason they would not forfeit their friendship. They might be mistaken, but they would never learn without making mistakes. They were not in a mood to do things which did not appeal to their own judgment and conscience (*hear, hear*). They would hear their advice with great consideration. They would try to follow it if they could, but the decision would be their own (*hear, hear*).

He wanted to make this clear, so that there should be absolutely no misunderstanding as to their position. Ever since the outbreak of the war the policy of the British statesmen not only in connection with India, but also in connection with the other parts of the world had shaken their faith in them. They asked Englishmen to put themselves in their position. Their men had been shot, their women insulted, and their children flogged naked. He possessed no racial hatred at all. His international sympathies were well-known. He would take Col. Wedgwood to the places where their men had been shot, their women insulted and their children whipped naked and then ask him whether they were not justified in assuming the atti-

tude they were taking. He would show Col. Wedgwood those women who were stripped naked and made to sit on thorns (*shame*).

That statement had been denied by officials, and they challenged them to hold an open inquiry. They wanted them to examine these women and come to a finding. After Col. Wedgwood had seen these places and spoken to these women, he would ask him to pass judgment on their position. They had absolutely no hatred for Englishmen as such, but the time had come when they should speak in no uncertain terms against those that exploited the Indians (*hear, hear*).

The resolution was carried, the whole assembly standing and cheering the Colonel, who again received an ovation on rising to address them.

COL. WEDGWOOD'S REPLY

Col. Wedgwood said he was there as a fraternal delegate from the trades unions of England and of the British Labour Party and he wanted to thank them first for the welcome they had given him as coming from those great bodies. He thanked the President for saying, that whatever he thought of British administration in India, he could still regard as friends the workers who sympathised with them, who like them, had their own struggles and had their own aspirations.

Mr Lajpat Rai had made a speech that morning as to what he was going to show to him. It was the first time he had heard about the flogging of women and he thought he would have to inquire from both sides before he could believe that such infamy had been committed. He was not there in spite of Mr Lajpat Rai's speech to speak to them as Indians; but he was there to speak to them as workers, because it was a trade union congress.

He had in his hand a telegram from "the socialists of

Madras" which struck him much. It stated that what the Indian workers demanded was industrial control and land nationalisation, and not any palliatives as profit sharing and increase in wages. That was the spirit which so far they had not had in India, but that was the driving spirit of the Independent Labour Party with which he was connected at home, and of the Council of Action. They must have that spirit if their labour organisation was to win through and Indian labour was to take its proper place in the Indian government of the future (*hear, hear*).

That telegram was also an example of another thing—the impracticable politics of the labour extremists. They would believe him when he said that the labour extremists like some extremists in this world were impractical. But the spirit was the thing that mattered, and that spirit was to be imported into the labour movement of this country.

The working classes had got to develop leaders who could make them class conscious, as Mr Gandhi had made people race conscious (*cheers*) and as Mrs Besant in the early days of the Home Rule League had made them conscious of their nationality (*cheers*). That was the right spirit and they must have the same spirit in the Indian labour movement. So they had to develop class consciousness. They must base their spirit on the knowledge of the injustice of the present social conditions in India and throughout the world. So long as the workers of the world were content to go on working like sheep without any aspiration and without any hope day after day on the same dreary round of work, so long as they were content that their children should be drudges without education, without house and without any hope for the future except to go on as manual workers, and as long as that contentment continued in spite of Trades Union Congress and in spite of political freedom, they would continue to be unintelligent wage-slaves. His business in England was to make English workers class conscious, to make them see the injustice of the present position, and to inspire them with the

real economic liberty, which was more necessary than even political liberty.

What was the injustice against which they were fighting today under their present civilisation? The worker had not got the full reward of his labour. He got what would keep him alive and no more. That was an injustice and as long as their civilisation was based upon injustice, the worker would not get the full reward of his labour. They must have in their labour movement the spirit that hated injustice, that must be the driving force behind the Indian labour movement, and he hoped when he next comes to India he would not find a single socialistic body who had not joined the international movement in the world, the social brotherhood of which aimed at securing universal justice, universal freedom.

Be Practical as well as Idealist

Now they must be practical men as well as idealists. The first thing which those who wanted to help labour should do was to put an end to the wild and unorganised strikes and to create labour unions. They must get their trade unions fixed up and they must get their leaders to understand the work of the trade unions so that they might be able to argue properly while sitting with the employers at the round table. They must have their unions first and then they could win either by negotiation or by downing tools. Otherwise a wild and unorganised strike was apt to fail and bring down the whole movement, because if a strike failed at one place, it would cause failure at other places also.

Proceeding, Col. Wedgwood said Indian labour should make a common cause with the labour of other countries, for he believed that no one race could secure freedom unless they secured it for the whole world (*loud cheers*). In conclusion, he said, during the railway strike in England, he had refused to use the railway and had gone about on his cycle (*cheers*).

GREETINGS TO BRITISH TU CONGRESS

A resolution extending the fraternal greetings of this congress to the British Trades Union Congress and to the Irish Trades Union Congress was then moved from the chair and carried.

Appointment of Standing Committee

Mr Mavji Govindji moved the following resolution :

“(a) Resolved that a Standing Committee for the year be nominated to manage the affairs of the congress, to provide permanent machinery for collection of information relating to the trade unions, help the unions by advice and otherwise further the cause of the workers of this country until the second session of this congress is held and adopts a permanent constitution.

“(b) That this Standing Committee consist of the following: (1) President of this session to be ex-officio President of the Standing Committee; (2) Mr Baptista, Vice-President; (3) A whole-time paid organising secretary to be hereafter appointed by the Standing Committee; (4) An office secretary to be appointed as in clause (3); (5) The following members (the names were taken as read) with powers to add the representatives of the newly-affiliated unions and such other persons as the committee may consider to coopt.

“(c) That this Standing Committee shall be authorised to collect and disburse funds for the purpose of maintaining a central office at Bombay and shall hold its sittings at such intervals and on such days as may be fixed by the President in consultation with the Vice-President and the secretaries.

“(d) That all decisions of this Standing Committee shall be arrived at by majority of votes.”

Mr Mavji Govindji dwelt upon the importance of orga-

nising labour and added that Bombay had the privilege of being the birthplace of their great national political assembly, the Indian National Congress, and now again had the privilege of bringing into being the first All-India Trade Union Congress (*cheers*). He asked them to start trade unions all over the country and contribute towards making the congress a success. They had prepared the engine in the shape of the Trade Union Congress and it was now for them to supply steam, in the shape of money, to set it going.

The President then read out the names of the members of the Standing Committee.

Mr. M. R. Arzoo and Mr Pandit supported the resolution.

QUESTION OF FUNDS

The President said he had heard a doubt expressed whether they would be able to get enough funds to carry on the work. Mr Tairsee had told him that he would do his best to see that the work of the congress had not to suffer on account of want of funds. He invited Mr Tairsee to address the assembly.

Mr L. R. Tairsee said, as he had been appointed treasurer, he took this opportunity of saying a few words to them as regards the prospect of raising funds to carry on the work. They had, by appointing him treasurer, put a pretty long chain round his neck which, however, in the past had borne the weight of many such chains and he did not think this new load would succeed in bending it. Narsinha Mehta possessed not a single pie when he started his great work but Shri Krishna was on his side and he got drafts in thousands. His (the speaker's) experience as treasurer in the past was that when money was wanted for a really good cause Bombay gave it not with one hand or two but as it were with a thousand hands (*cheers*) and he had high hopes that Bombay would not fail to respond in an equally generous manner on the present occasion, and he did not

think the engine to which Mr Mavji had referred would have to stop going because of want of funds. But he thought what would be required more was not money but workers and he hoped they would come forward in large numbers.

The resolution was carried.

Other Resolutions

DRAFT CONSTITUTION

The following resolution was then moved from the chair and carried:

“Resolved that the draft constitution prepared by the working committee be submitted to the Standing Committee nominated in resolution No. II for (a) circulation among the affiliated unions and such others as express a desire for affiliation; (b) after consideration of their opinions for submission to the second session at which the draft constitution shall be finally adopted.”

IMMUNITY FROM POLICE INTERFERENCE

Mr E. L. Iyer moved the following resolution:

“That this congress is of opinion that the government should issue general instructions to the heads of districts and the police department that no obstruction be placed in the way of workers organising themselves into unions.”

Mr Iyer said this was a very important resolution for the progress and development of trade unions in India. Referring to Mr Wildridge's letter in that day's *Chronicle*, he said, Mr Wildridge would not have written that letter if he had realised the difficulties that confronted the trade union. He (the speaker) would give them an instance of interference by the police in the progress of these unions.

This instance occurred in Madras at the time of the strike of rikshawalas. For the first two or three days the meeting convened by the union was attended by 400 or 500 strikers but on the fourth day only about fifty men attended, because he alleged one of the rikshawalas was openly thrashed in the streets by a police sergeant for going on strike. They wanted to take legal proceedings against the sergeant but one of the two or three witnesses refused to come forward to give evidence. This instance showed how interference on the part of these minor political deities hampered the work of the formation and guidance of trade unions.

Mr Chand Saheb of Shiolapur seconded the resolution and referred to what had happened at that place during the strikes.

A Workman's Powerful Appeal:

Mr Tej Singh, supporting the resolution, said he was a workman employed in the Tata Works at Jamshedpur. Referring to the Jamshedpur Strike, he said, that strike lasted for twenty-two days and the strikers throughout behaved peacefully. And yet, he asked, what was the result? Producing on the platform a workman who had lost one arm, the speaker said that was the result (*shame*).

It was absolutely untrue to say that the strikers were attacked because they wanted to wreck a railway line in the works. They had wanted to do nothing of the kind. The firing resulted in twenty-two men being wounded and six killed (*shame*). He deeply regretted that such a thing should have happened in the works which bore the honoured name of Jamshedji Tata, a name which the workers at Jamshedpur cherished with the deepest affection and respect. He regretted that the directors had done nothing beyond expressing mere lip sympathy with their men.

He was ashamed that he had to speak against his employers whose salt he ate, but he looked upon it as an imperative duty to speak out, principally because these things had

happened in an Indian company and that too a company which bore a name which was universally respected in India. It might be that he would be dismissed for having thus spoken out, but he was not afraid of that. He had done his duty.

Mr J. B. Miller of the Punjab further supported the resolution, asked the members of the congress and the different trades unions to contribute their mite to the funds and make the union a "pucca" thing.

The resolution was further supported by Mr S. B. Raoot, and carried.

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AGENDA FOR INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONFERENCE

Mr N. M. Joshi moved the following resolution:

"That the recommendations of the International Labour Conference and the agenda to be placed before the next meeting of the International Labour Conference be referred to the Standing Committee of the congress for consideration and disposal."

Mr Joshi said the Indian Trade Union Congress neither accepted nor rejected the recommendations of the International Labour Conference, held last year in Washington. The congress intended to refer the question to the Standing Committee for consideration. If they wanted to better the condition of Indian labourers, it could not be done without communication with the labourers of other countries. The first resolution of the conference was relating to the working hours. It recommended an eight-hour day for all nations except India. In the case of India they fixed ten hours work daily. Another point which was discussed in the conference was about unemployment.

Preferential Treatment of Western Labour

In Europe and such other countries, every month inquiries were made by governments to ascertain the

number of unemployed. But in India there was no such thing. The conference also resolved that the respective governments must make some provision for their unemployed people. But no such recommendation was made to the government of India. The conference also recommended that women workers should get two days' leisure in the week and that they should not work at night. About children it was recommended that no boy under the age of twelve years should be admitted in any factory in India, and in the case of other countries the age limit was fixed at fourteen years. Up to now there were factory inspectors to inquire into the health of the workers, but now it was settled that there should be regular doctors, employed by the state to examine the physique of the workers at reasonable intervals.

Mr F. J. Ginwala seconded the proposition. He said the International Labour Conference recommended 39-hour week for the cold countries in Europe and suggested 60-hour week for the Indian labourers, who were weaker in constitution than the labourers of colder countries. In his opinion it would have been far better if the conference recommended less than 39-hour week for India.

RESTRICTION OF EXPORT OF FOODSTUFFS

Mr Joseph Baptista moved:

"That in the opinion of this congress, in view of the present scarcity of foodstuffs and high price, some temporary restrictions on the export of foodstuffs should be imposed for such period as may be necessary with the object of bringing down the present high cost of living. This congress further refers the general question of the total prohibition of all exports of foodstuffs to a subcommittee to be nominated by the President."

Mr Baptista said the resolution was a most important one. The resolution referred to the restriction on the export of grains. The export of grains must be restricted at

least for a year. Export of grains without a tare has raised prices in this country to the same level as in the markets to which they are exported. They had been repeatedly told that the wages of the workers had been increased by 50 per cent while the prices of foodstuffs had soared more than 100 per cent. Employers were crying for better output, but how could there be better output if the children did not get better food? He was one who believed they required nothing to be imported into India from outside. They could produce all they wanted. It should be one of the vital principles of the government that they shall not import anything that can be produced in this country. He believed that the government of the country did not apply itself sufficiently to solve the question of food scarcity.

Mrs Rasikmani B. Desai seconded the resolution.

Mr V. M. Pawar supporting the resolution, said there were three gates through which our foodstuff went out. The first gate was Bombay, the second Karachi and the third was Calcutta. Bombay and Karachi were the chief doors through which their chief necessities of life went to other countries. As regards Karachi, the NW Railway Union, of which Mr Miller was the President, had passed a resolution not to handle any foodgrain which was to be exported from India. In Bombay too, about a fortnight ago, the dock labourers passed a resolution to the same effect.

Mr Lalji Padamsey further supported the resolution which was carried unanimously.

MEMORANDUM ON LABOURERS' GRIEVANCES

Mr M. A. Khan moved:

“That this congress asks the Standing Committee to prepare an exhaustive memorandum on the present grievances of Indian labour with special reference to the following: (1) Disabilities arising out of and consequent upon strikes, (2) establishment and confiscation of gratuity and provident fund and other benefits, (3) employment of military,

armed police, boy scouts and Pathan hooligans during strike, (4) corporal punishment meted out by employers, (5) condition of workers in coalmines, (6) forfeiture of wages.”

Mr Jalil Khan seconded the resolution and it was carried.

LONG-TIME SERVICE CONTRACTS

Mr Mavji Govindji moved: “All special laws concerning labour which make a worker liable to criminal prosecution for breach of long-time service contract be abrogated.”

Mr Mavji said this resolution concerned those labourers about whose pitiable condition labourers of Bombay and other cities could not form an idea. In some places there were Indian labourers who were treated even worse than beasts. Though slave trade had been put a stop to, the minds of many employers had not changed as yet. And there were still such employers who would not like to see their employees raise their heads like men. In Fiji, in the tea gardens of Assam and in the plantations of Bihar, employers took an agreement from their men at the time of employment. During the period of agreement the worker would not be allowed to leave his service under any circumstances. If he fell sick and wanted to leave the service, he was hauled up before a magistrate who in his turn sent him to jail.

The resolution seconded by Mr L. G. Khare was carried unanimously.

RESOLUTIONS FROM THE CHAIR

The following resolutions which were put from the chair were also carried unanimously.

“That all the grievances submitted to the Trade Union Congress by individual trade unions and resolutions submitted to it for adoption be referred to the Standing Committee for inquiry and disposal.”

“The resolutions of the Seamen’s Conference be also referred for disposal.”

“That this congress authorises the Standing Committee to prepare as early as possible a Labour Year Book as well as a handbook of labour organisation.”

“That in the opinion of the congress legislative provision should be made for adequate compensation for injuries suffered from accidents and/or insurance against sickness, including sick and privilege leave somewhat on the lines of the Civil Service Regulations, for those who work in factories, mines, docks and on railways.”

“That this congress records its emphatic protest against the system of forced labour and forced exaction from villagers in any shape or form on the occasion of visits of officers, which is still prevalent in many parts of India and calls upon government to prohibit the same at an early date.”

“That this congress expresses its general sympathy with the demands of the tramway, postal, telegraph and gas workers of Bombay and appoints a deputation to wait upon His Excellency the Governor of Bombay and request him to mediate and bring these strikes to an end at an early date in such way as would be satisfactory to both sides.”

The President at the outset said he wished to correct a misstatement in the *Times of India*. The statement was due to a mistake of Colonel Wedgwood in understanding him to say that women had been flogged in the Punjab. He never made that statement. When the Colonel was speaking he corrected him and the Colonel corrected himself. The *Times of India* report had given this point substantially correctly, but in the summary at the top a mistake had been made. He (the speaker) would make it clear that he never made a statement that women were flogged.

THE GOVERNOR AND ITUC

The President announced that Mr Baptista had sent His Excellency the Governor an invitation to attend this

congress, and the following reply had been received from the private secretary to His Excellency.

“His Excellency regrets that he is unable at such a short notice to accept the invitation of the congress to attend its proceedings. If, however, the congress should desire to make any representations to His Excellency in regard to the general interest of Indian labour he would be very willing to have an opportunity of hearing them.”

DELEGATES TO INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONFERENCE

Mr L. R. Tairsee moved the following resolution :

“That this congress nominates the following gentlemen to represent Indian labour on the International Labour Conference to be held next year at Geneva under the Conventions of the League of Nations: (1) Representatives' Delegate, Lala Lajpat Rai, President, Trade Union Congress, (2) Advisers, Mr B. P. Wadia and Mr D. Chaman Lall, and empowers the President to add names of advisers to represent agricultural interests, etc. Further, this congress nominates Mr N. M. Joshi for the panel of the Commission of Inquiry instituted under the League's Covenant.”

Mr Tairsee said the appointment of a representative rested with government who, however, under the rules, had to make the nominations in consultation with the labour unions of India. They had always regretted that government and they did not agree, but he hoped government would on this occasion accept the names they had suggested. The congress knew how devoted and friend of labour Lala Lajpat Rai was. They were glad that after being deported and exported he had again been imported into India (*applause*). They also knew Mr Wadia as a friend of labour and as to Mr Chaman Lall they were aware of the most valuable services which he had rendered in connection with the preparations for holding this congress. He next referred

to the qualifications of the other names suggested in the resolution and hoped the congress would unanimously pass the resolution.

Mr J. N. Haldar seconded the resolution which was supported by Mr Jalil Khan and Mr Subhani and carried.

LABOURERS OVERSEAS

Mrs Deep Narayan Singh moved the following resolution :

“That this congress protests against the brutal treatment meted out to Indian workers, men and women, in Fiji and proposes that full independent inquiry be made and proper facilities afforded to those who wish to return to their motherland.”

Mrs Singh said, before she visited Fiji she had read accounts of the sufferings of their countrymen and countrywomen in Fiji more harrowing than those of the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy. She narrated the causes which led to the strike of Indian labourers in Fiji. When their representations for an increase in their wages to meet the abnormal rise in the prices of necessaries of life did not avail they took the only course that was left open to them. They struck work. Relating what subsequently happened, she said martial law was proclaimed there, and they knew what martial law meant. Men were shot down in the streets and floggings took place. The only friend that their poor countrymen in Fiji had was Mr Hotland (*long cheers*), Labour Member of New Zealand.

Piteous Cry

Continuing, Mrs Singh said she had brought to the people of India message from their countrymen and countrywomen in Fiji. One and all of these men and women that she met there asked her what the people of India were going to do for them. They said they were aware that their

countrymen in India had held a few meetings of protest but they asked what further steps they were going to take in the matter. They demanded an inquiry, not the farce of an inquiry, but an independent inquiry, to send India's representatives there and investigate into the miserable conditions under which their countrymen in Fiji lived. Above all, their countrymen in Fiji appealed to the Indians here to bring them back home as they alleged they were obstructed in doing this. She concluded by appealing to her countrymen and countrywomen to listen to and not disregard this piteous cry.

Mr M. B. Maniar, seconding the resolution, said Indians should render immediate help to their countrymen in Fiji.

Mrs Avantikabai Gokhale, supporting the resolution, asked them never to send Indian workers to work abroad when such treatment was meted out to them there if they had any self-respect and sense of honour.

The President, putting the resolution to vote, asked those critics who charged them with creating racial hatred to bear in mind the treatment which was accorded to their countrymen in the different British colonies. He hoped the message which Mrs Singh had brought would be carried to every Indian home in the country and meetings held throughout India.

The resolution was carried.

LABOUR CONDITIONS IN COALFIELDS

Swami Viswananda moved the following resolution:

“That this congress emphatically protests against the prevalent conditions of labour in Indian coalfields and calls upon the government and coal owners to take immediate steps to remove such horrible conditions.”

Mr Ramkumar Misra seconded the resolution, which was carried.

SPECIAL FRANCHISE FOR LABOUR

Mr B. P. Wadia moved the following resolution :

“That this congress is of opinion that the law should be so changed as to recognise the right of labour to have a special representation by election on the legislative councils of the country on the same principles that the different ‘Chambers of Commerce and Millowners’ and Planters’ Associations have.”

Mr Wadia said this representation would give the workers a method and weapon of work, at least one of the important methods and weapons of work. The Joint Committee of Parliament had made two recommendations, one of which was for having special representative to be elected by labourers and wage earners and the second was that the wage earning capacity should be made indirect qualification for voting. But on account of some reason or another these recommendations had not been accepted. At the present moment, labour was without vote.

In the politics of the future the workers would have their own important problems and their fight would not be necessarily against government but against interested capitalist, white and brown. They would have to fight for privileges and rights and their opponents would be both foreigners and Indians. The best method of carrying on that fight would be to give expression to their opinion in the legislative councils of the country so that they could usher in a new era when they shall know their rights and impose their will on legislature.

The Indian workers today when they demanded this right of representation were better educated and had better culture than the workmen of England when they got the vote. There was no necessity to wait until there was a wider diffusion of education because the Indian worker had culture of his own. When capitalists had their special representation on the legislative councils there was no reason why the workmen should not have that privilege.

Mr Gokhale seconded and Mr R. S. Nimbkar supported the resolution, which was carried.

THE DRINK EVIL

Mr V. J. Sathaye moved the following resolution :

“That this congress demands that the authorities in India prohibit the opening of drink shops in the vicinity of factories in labour centres.”

Mr Sathaye dwelt upon the evils resulting from the proximity of such shops to factories and labour centres and urged that milk shops should be located there instead.

Swami Lal Mani Aryapracharak said liquor was the devil's poison which workers should shun.

Mr Natesa Naiker supported the resolution, which was carried.

BOMBAY LABOUR DISCONTENT

Mr N. C. Kelkar moved the following resolutions :

“That this congress condemns the attitude of the employers towards the strikes of the city of Bombay who have conducted courageously the struggle for over a month remarkably free from violence, and urges upon our countrymen to give what they can to help the strikers for bettering the condition of their lives.

“This congress urges His Excellency the Governor to intervene to terminate the strikes upon terms honourable to all concerned while securing for the strikers appropriate wages and conditions. This congress appoints a deputation consisting of Messrs Baptista, Dalvi, Ginwala, Pawar and Chaman Lall to interview His Excellency the Governor for the purposes abovementioned as well as to lay the resolutions of the congress before His Excellency.”

Mr Kelkar said the *Times of India* had tried to ridicule them by saying that the strike had taken place before the

“unions” were started. But unions were not started because there was no labour discontent before. When two men quarrelled of whom one was very strong and the other weak, people naturally sided with the latter without regard to any consideration whether his cause was right or wrong. Similarly he appealed to government to befriend the labourers who were weak against the capitalists who were strong.

Mr Vaikunthari Desai seconded the resolution.

Mr Miller, supporting the resolution, said if the tram and other strikes were not brought to an end, he would appeal to his Lahore friends to close all karkhanas in Lahore, and would make a similar appeal to Madras.

The resolution was carried.

MR B. G. HORNIMAN

Mr L. R. Tairsee moved the following resolution :

“That this congress places on record its deep and grateful appreciation of the valuable services rendered by Mr B. G. Horniman to the cause of Indian labour generally and of the workers in Bombay particularly by ably championing their cause and striving for their political and economic uplift. Further, this congress condemns the unjust and arbitrary restraint placed upon Mr Horniman’s freedom and calls for the immediate removal of the said restraint.”

Mr Tairsee said Mr Horniman was not only the friend of Bombay but the whole of India (*cheers*). Mr Horniman had been sent home for what he had done for India. He had made India his home (*cheers*). He was like Prometheus, who brought to earth the spark of divine fire from Heaven and for this sin the Council of Angels resolved to tie him to a rock where a bird pecked at him. A somewhat similar fate had been meted out to Mr Horniman by restraining his freedom because he did not extol the bureaucracy and

was not moderate in his love for India (*hear, hear*). His sin was that he raised his voice against the actions of bureaucracy and they sent him home. They knew not what the charges were against him and what were the sins he had committed in the eyes of that bureaucracy, but the people of India knew that he was their brother (*cheers*) and fought for their rights and was hence punished (*shame*).

Friend of Labourers

Continuing Mr Tairsee said, by this resolution they wanted to tell Mr Horniman that though some, who called themselves his friends in better times, might have forgotten him, the workmen of Bombay for whom he fought so much had not forgotten him (*loud cheers*). A recent letter from him to a friend of his in Bombay showed what kindly feelings he had for the poor worker of this city. In that letter he asked his friend to tell the workers of Bombay that he always thought of them, that they held the first place in his mind and that he would always work for them (*loud cheers*). He had been condemned without a trial and an opportunity to make his defence and sent home. It was their duty to demand that the restraint upon his freedom should be removed.

Whose Fault?

Mrs M. A. Jinnah, seconding the resolution, said the resolution demanded that the arbitrary restraint that had been put upon Mr Horniman's freedom should be immediately removed.

But might she put it to them that it was no fault of Mr Horniman's nor of government's but of their own that he was not in India (*hear, hear*). What had they done in the matter? She thought the best thing they could do to get him back to India was to agitate and prepare for something more than agitation, not only to bring him back here but to get their rights and privileges (*cheers*).

Need of agitation

Mr Chhaganlal P. Nanavati, supporting the resolution, said Mr Horniman had done much for the workers in Bombay, but his services were not confined to one class or one city but extended to the whole of India (*cheers*). As an instance of his services to the poor people of Bombay he mentioned what Mr Horniman did during the terrible influenza epidemic in Bombay two years ago, when he visited the workmen's chawls and rendered them what help he could. He studied the terrible insanitary conditions in which these people had to live and brought the state of affairs to the notice of the Influenza Committee of the citizens. In view of all that he had done for the people of this country it was their duty to tell him, which they did by this resolution, that they deeply felt his absence and they prayed to the almighty for his speedy return among them (*loud cheers*).

Mr Anantram Vaikunthram, further supporting the resolution, said Mr Horniman was a friend of workers and not of capitalists. When Mr Horniman was deported a number of lame and blind poor men who used to receive help from him went crying to his bungalow bemoaning the fate that would be theirs in the absence of their benefactor. Referring to the work which Mr Horniman did for the poorer people during the influenza epidemic, the speaker said Mr Horniman went from chawl to chawl, worked the whole day and night, put stricken people into ambulances and took them to hospital. He appealed to the people of Bombay and the whole of India to agitate until they got Mr Horniman back to India (*cheers*).

Mr D. N. Singh further supported the resolution and spoke about the deep regard in which the people of India held Mr Horniman.

Mr D. Chaman Lall further supporting the resolution said it was a duty but a sad one to have to be standing there to support a resolution for the recall of Mr Horniman

to India. It was a sad duty because, as Mrs Jinnah had pointed out, the fault was theirs that Mr Horniman was not among them. The restraint put upon Mr Horniman's liberty affected not one individual but involved the principle of freedom. He had done incalculable good to this country, 'was an upholder of their freedom and had fought for their rights (*cheers*) as few Englishmen had done.' And what was it that they had done in India? They should organise and hold meetings in every village, throughout the country demanding his immediate return to India (*loud cheers*).

Arbitrary Action

Mr Jamnadas Dwarkadas, further supporting the resolution, said he heartily agreed with every word of it. The action of the government in deporting Mr Horniman without a trial was quite arbitrary. Mr Horniman had asked for a trial but this had been refused him. They had protested against the arbitrary action of the government of Bombay in deporting Mr Horniman without a trial and he (the speaker) would say that this conduct towards Mr Horniman was the greatest blot on the administration of H.E. the Governor for whom he had the greatest respect and whose sympathy with the people of this presidency he recognised. He hoped this blot on his administration would not be allowed to remain one moment longer. Mr Horniman had rendered great services to India which he had adopted as his own land and done his best for its uplift, and it was the bounden duty of the people of India to protest against his arbitrary deportation (*loud cheers*).

WOMEN WORKERS, ETC.

The following resolutions were put from the chair and carried:

"This congress is of opinion that every mill, factory and workshop where women are employed should be provided

with special accommodation where the women workers can, during their hours of work, keep their young children.”

“That this congress resolves that government be requested to appoint special lady inspectors for the purpose of examining the condition of labour and of safeguarding the interests of women operatives.”

“That this congress places on record its grateful acknowledgement of the work done by the Indian Workers’ Welfare League of London and by Mr Shapurji Saklatvala on behalf of the workers of India and hereby authorises the Standing Committee to get into communication with the League with a view to closer cooperation for the representation in England of the interests of Indian workers.”

“That this congress records an emphatic protest against the action of government in proscribing the *Daily Herald* of London.”

Mr Baptista, then addressing the assembly, said there was a lot of victimisation of union workers by their employers. Messrs Alcock and Company had dismissed two of their workmen because, he alleged, they were trade unionists. Mr Baptista produced these men on the platform and the President announced that a Bombay union had promised to give them Rs 500.

President's Closing Speech

Bringing the proceedings of the congress to a close, the President said it was his duty to thank those who conceived the idea of holding this congress and carried out the work with patience and courage. He was told by Mr Baptista that the idea had originated with Mr Chaman Lall (*cheers*) and Mr Pawar (*cheers*), and he took this opportunity of thanking them on behalf of the congress for the work they had done in making the congress a success. He next thanked the volunteers and that band of wealthy workers who, by their help in making the congress a success, had shown that though they did not belong to the working classes their heart felt for humanity as deeply and nobly as those who did not possess riches. He congratulated Bombay on possessing this band of wealthy workers.

Proceeding, the President said they had inaugurated there a movement which would play an important part in the decision of the destinies of the world. They had started the movement not to further the cause exclusively of one class of their countrymen but of the whole of the country. The interests of the workmen were identical with those of the rest of their countrymen, and the movement had been started, not out of any class hatred, but with the object of bringing the country to the level of prosperity of other parts of the world, which they could do only when their workmen got human wages, and unless this was done no country could really prosper. For the prosperity of a

country was not to be judged by the number of its capitalists, not by the amount of the import of gold and silver, not by the returns of trade figures but by the condition in which the masses of that country lived (*hear, hear*). When they in India said that they were a poor people they did not mean to say that they had no rich people in their country but that the masses lived under conditions of life which were poorer than in most of the countries of the world, and they wanted to bring them to the level of other parts of the world.

Concluding, the President said, if the workers had the heart and the will to achieve success they would achieve that success. He took this opportunity of saying that the workmen of India and his other countrymen were inferior to none in morality or character. The only thing which made them helpless was lack of education. With the help of this congress they should be able to organise labour and obtain its just rights (*loud cheers*).

VOTE OF THANKS

Mr Jammadas Dwarkadas proposed a hearty vote of thanks to the President. He said Lala Lajpat Rai had rendered invaluable services to the cause of his country.

Mr Mavji Govindji, seconded the resolution.

Mr Baptista, supporting the resolution, said Mr Lajpat Rai was a man who harboured no hatred even towards those who harmed him.

The vote of thanks was carried with acclamation, the whole assembly standing up and cheering the President, and a similar ovation was accorded to Mian Muhammed Haji Jan Muhammed Chhotani, who gave a donation of Rs 500 to the congress funds, and Mr Baptista when votes of thanks to them were passed.

Deputation to the Governor

The Trade Union Congress Deputation, headed by Mr Joseph Baptista, waited upon His Excellency the Governor at the Government House, Ganeshkhind, and submitted the following memorial to His Excellency on behalf of the Trade Union Congress :

To His Excellency Sir George Ambrose Lloyd, G.C.I.E.,
Governor of Bombay

May it please Your Excellency.

We regret that Your Excellency was unable to accept the invitation of the Chairman of the Reception Committee to attend the first session of the Trade Union Congress due to shortness of the notice. Such a congress being unprecedented in the annals of India, Your Excellency's presence would have heightened the auspiciousness of the inauguration and dispelled all false notions concerning legality of the movement. But in the absence of your presence Your Excellency's message expressing your willingness to have an opportunity of hearing any representation regarding the general interests of Indian labour was very welcome. The congress responded by appointing this deputation to interview Your Excellency for the purpose of laying the resolutions of the congress before Your Excellency as well as to urge Your Excellency to intervene to terminate the strikes in Bombay upon terms honourable

to all concerned while securing for the strikers appropriate wages and conditions.

We venture to assure Your Excellency that we harbour no feelings of hostility to government, but we cannot conceal from you our conviction right or wrong that government is rather capitalistic in its sympathies. Every effort made to remove this impression is bound to prove beneficial. It is therefore desirable that government should abandon its attitude of benevolent neutrality and make it legally obligatory on employers of labour to recognise trade unions and thus give effect to the resolution of the League of Nations upon this subject. We further venture to suggest that district and police officers be instructed to place no obstacles in the way of workers organising themselves into unions, and generally to conduct themselves with such tact and care as to give no cause for any suspicion of partiality especially while a strike is in progress.

We also wish to assure Your Excellency that we have no intention whatever of originating or intensifying any conflict between capital and labour. On the contrary we desire to promote harmony between them and we believe that with "sweet reasonableness" on both sides and some assistance from government this object is attainable. But we cannot close our eyes to the ills of labour. The workmen are notoriously ill-paid, ill-fed, ill-housed, ill-clothed and ill-educated or uneducated. Under the stress of these ills, driven by necessity, the men resort to strikes-cum-violence menacing the peace of the city and the life and property of citizens, as Your Excellency yourself have witnessed. The results of these burdens they are groaning under are economically disastrous to the country. These ills mean premature death, reduced longevity, impaired vitality, reduced capacity of production and easy prey to diseases. It becomes worse from generation to generation. Under these circumstances the intellectuals sympathising with labour, animated purely by feelings of humanity, interven-

ed to apply the lessons from the British Book of Labour to the problems of India. The first requisite is the organisation of labour. For this reason the congress has appointed a Standing Committee with an organising secretary. Any assistance which government can render would facilitate the formation of unions.

The principles which we desire to inculcate are that the well-being of society depends upon the well-being of labour, that society is the common employer of capital and labour, that capital and labour are not buyers and sellers, but copartners, that labour ought to reap the full fruits of their labour, that the state ought to fix the minimum wage for labour and the maximum profit for capital and that all excess profits ought to be to the benefit of labour. *Pari passu* cultivation of grain should be stimulated, and an embargo placed on exportation of foodstuffs. Statistics indicate the quantity of grains is not sufficient for home consumption. There would be no objection to the exportation of surplus grain; but even then there ought to be some export duty to keep the internal prices from rising to the level of the foreign market. This embargo becomes imperative at a time when famine conditions prevail. The congress therefore has passed a resolution recommending temporary restrictions on the export of foodstuffs. We would here suggest the immediate appointment of provincial committees for investigating the cost of living and the causes contributing towards inflation of prices, and for suggesting measures of relief. We need not emphasise the fact that the increased cost of living is the root cause for labour discontent and unrest which find expression in strikes.

We believe Your Excellency personally recognises the reasonableness of the claim of workers to nominate delegates and advisers to represent Indian labour at the International Labour Conference. Hitherto the objection urged was that there were no unions in India but this objection cannot be advanced in the face of the fact that 97 trade

unions were affiliated to the congress and 57 represented thereat by 800 representatives speaking on behalf of no less than 120,000 members of trade unions and enjoying the support and sympathy of millions who have not become members of their respective unions. We understand that there is no limit to the number of advisers who can accompany the delegate except that imposed by the factor of cost. But comparatively speaking this would prove a more bagatelle to defray the cost of one delegate and five or six advisers from India. We, therefore, trust Your Excellency will exercise your influence and powers of persuasion to induce the government of India to accept the delegates and advisers nominated by the congress, three or four of whom will be workmen from field, factory or ships.

We respectfully request Your Excellency's attention to the treatment accorded to our countrymen in Fiji which is exciting great indignation wherever their sorrows and sufferings are read or narrated. In the interests of peace and goodwill it is imperative that an independent and impartial inquiry be made in the matter without delay. Proper facilities should be given to those who wish to return to India.

The continued deportation of Mr Horniman is also causing much discontent among all classes and specially among the workers in Bombay for whom he laboured strenuously even at the risk of his life. We believe it is entirely in Your Excellency's power to remove the bar to his return to Bombay and we earnestly entreat the removal of this bar.

We do not quite know whether our appeal to Your Excellency to intervene to settle the disputes between the strikers and employers is within the scope of Your Excellency's message, but we believe it is in the general interests of labour that strikes should be recognised as a legitimate method of collective bargaining, that it is "a peculiar method of doing business" and not a declaration of war for a trial of strength. Unfortunately employers in India look upon

strikes as a declaration of war engineered by self-seeking outsiders. We wish to assure Your Excellency there is no foundation for such allegation so far as the present strikes in Bombay are concerned. They are purely and exclusively economic in origin for better wages and better conditions. It is therefore regrettable that they are not considered on their merits. Whilst allegations are made against self-interested outside agitators, it is worthy of notice that no employer in Bombay has yet yielded to mere pressure, that all declare that whatever concessions they have granted were made exclusively on the merits of the case. It is to be deplored that these concessions were not made prior to the strikes. Your Excellency secured some concessions for the mill-workers at the last strike. They did not get all they demanded. The millowners contended that their concessions were liberal. Nevertheless, they have now voluntarily augmented the percentage of allowance, thereby justifying these strikes. We agree that there should normally be no strike without previous notice, but this period of notice should be utilised for investigating the grievances and not arranging for filling the place of would-be strikers. Unless this principle is acknowledged and acted upon, the notice would be suicidal and it is unfair to expect any one to commit suicide.

We do not desire to trouble Your Excellency with the details of the grievances and demands of the workers on strike at present. The Gas Workers' Strike could be ended at once if all were re-employed, but Mr Burch declines to do so. The Tramway Strike could also be ended without much difficulty. Mr C. V. Mehta's conversation with Messrs Baptista and Pawar discloses excellent basis for settlement if the company would make the proposals. The Postal Strike should be considered on its merits. Mr Baptista has offered that Mr Sams and he be empowered to investigate and make recommendations which should be accepted by government. All points of difference should be referred to an arbitrator. We fain would ask Your Excellency to arbitrate but we feel

that it may not be fair to Your Excellency to do so here but we beg to assure Your Excellency that we would gratefully accept your arbitration in all the three strikes we have mentioned.

In conclusion we are obliged to Your Excellency for giving us this opportunity of placing before Your Excellency what we consider beneficial in the general interests of labour and society.

We have the honour to be, Your Excellency's humble servant

JOSEPH BAPTISTA

THE GOVERNOR'S REPLY

The following is H. E. the Governor's reply to the address of the deputation of the Trade Union Congress.

Gentlemen,

As governor of a presidency which can claim for itself a very advanced position in the industrial development of India, I welcome this opportunity of receiving at your hands an exposition, necessarily of course very brief, and summary of the claims which labour in India has to make upon the attention and consideration of government. Next to the maintenance of the fundamental conditions of all orderly and progressive society I believe there is no more important social or administrative problem than the position of labour in the community. So important indeed and so comprehensive is the problem that the policy and proceedings of government in regard to it can only form one factor out of many and even of this restricted aspect of the whole I must confine myself to a few points of the most general character.

Let me at once say that I welcome and accept without reservation your assurance that your proceedings are actuated by no inimical spirit to government. I am further convinced that that accurately represents the disposal of Indian labour as a whole. Government fully reciprocates your

assurance. While you attribute some measure of capitalistic sympathies to government, an attribution of partiality which I cannot entertain without promptly disavowing it, I am glad to observe that you do so with hesitation and proceed to correct the first hasty impression by conceding to us a benevolent neutrality.

On this point, however, I should like to ask you to observe a necessary—I am sure you will agree it is a necessary—distinction. The interests of labour, what I may call its particular and permanent interests in the normal course and progress of national life, are matters in which government is not a neutral however benevolent, but an active ally. But where, as must at times inevitably occur, there is a conflict of interests as during the progress of industrial disputes, then it is the duty of government to hold the scales of justice evenly, and in such a case I should be the last to disclaim an attitude of neutrality. But, believe me, I prefer the role of active alliance, and I trust that I shall be able as the organisation of labour develops and becomes more articulate to count on a reciprocal spirit not merely of absence of hostility but of real confidence and cooperation with government.

I venture to think that my government has already since I have been here, given some substantial proofs that these are not mere academic sentiments. The development scheme in Bombay which we have undertaken will, I trust, be of special and lasting benefit to the labouring population—for so long as labour is housed in crowded and insanitary hovels it cannot gain self-respect or make any progress. As regards also the results of recent industrial disputes you have yourselves been good enough to ascribe to the good offices of my government some credit for concessions granted to the workers. These are already some proofs of government's anxiety for and interest in the general advance and improvement of the lot of the worker.

You may be interested to learn that my government will

very shortly have set up a Labour Bureau competent to advise it on all that affects the interest of labour and have secured the services of a highly experienced and competent official of the Board of Trade to inaugurate the work of this bureau.

One of the greatest difficulties that confront us all in India in matters affecting labour and industrial disputes is the absence of accurate statistics which would enable an accurate judgment to be formed on the workman's cost of living and upon the ever fluctuating relations between his wages and that cost of living. A scientific but prompt examination of this question, the compilation of workmen's budgets, the translation of this statistical material into forms accessible to and readily understood by the public will, I believe, not only be of the very greatest value to labour as a whole, but will enable the newspapers and the general public to take a wider and more intelligent interest in the affairs of labour, and when the workman's case is a good one and his claims are fair, it will rally to his side a well informed public opinion. These matters have too long lain hidden in the dark: let the true facts be brought to the light and much good will result. This officer will, I hope, be arriving in India very shortly, so that in a few months' time we shall be in a better position than ever before, to form some conclusions on these important matters.

So much then for the information which government is preparing itself to give to the public and to the trades unions. I confess however that I and I think also the public at large would have been interested to have heard more in the address which you have just submitted to me as regards the 97 trade unions which were affiliated to the congress, their method of formation, their constitution, their system of ballot and election and the actual experience of those who represent them in the trades for which they speak. Up to the present the general public is, I think, very largely ignorant on the points to which I have referred and a closer

knowledge of the constitution and methods of trade unions in this country would be welcomed.

As regards the stage and the manner in which government can attempt with fair prospects of success to assist in the solution of industrial disputes, I must ask you again to observe an important distinction which in the actual stress of contending claims is liable to become obscured. I mean the distinction between intervention and arbitration. Government having regard to the paramount general interests of the community must always reserve to itself the discretion, as it must accept the obligation, to intervene when those interests are imminently and dangerously affected. But this is an instrument which should only be used in very exceptional cases and its application as a normal measure might be positively detrimental to a solution of disputes on sound and permanent lines. Arbitration can of course only succeed if and when both parties are ready and willing to submit their claims to adjudication. This is not a function which I think I can advantageously assume myself, but in those cases where the conditions I have mentioned exist there is rarely any practical difficulty in finding a suitable agency for the purpose.

As regards the cost of living, I recognise that this is the most serious economic fact we have to face, and I assure you that government on the one hand appreciate and sympathise with the hardships it entails on labour, and on the other are giving to the exceedingly difficult and complicated administrative questions it raises their most serious and anxious attention.

As regards the attitude of government to trades unions, I can sum up my own views in a few words. I regard the organisation of labour on sound economic lines as an unquestionable advantage to labour, to the community and to government, and progress in this direction will receive my sympathy and support.

Executive Committee Meetings November 1920 to September 1921

First Meeting, 2 November 1920:

1) "Resolved that Mr N. M. Joshi's appointment to panel of the Commission of Inquiry be made on behalf of the organised workers of India."

(2) "Resolved that the salaries of the General Secretary and of the Organising Secretary be fixed at Rs 500 per mensem."

Second Meeting, 5 April 1921:

(1) "Resolved that the appointment of Mr D. Chaman Lall as General Secretary be confirmed."

Third Meeting, 15 June 1921:

A meeting of the Executive Committee of the All-India Trade Union Congress was held at the head office, 20 Tamarind Lane, Fort Bombay, on 15 June. Mr Joseph Baptista, Vice-President, Trade Union Congress, presided. The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved. Mr D. Chaman Lall was appointed General Secretary, Trade Union Congress, in the place of Mr V. M. Pawar, with three Assistant Secretaries.

The Secretary's report was read and a committee was

appointed to examine the report and present it at the next meeting of the Standing Committee.

In the absence of the Treasurer, Mr L. R. Tairsee, the General Secretary read his report, which was also referred to the subcommittee on a motion by Mr Chaman Lall. It was decided that this report should be completed and audited at the earliest possible date. It was decided that this should be done within a fortnight.

In view of the need for funds with which to carry on the work of the Trade Union Congress, it was decided that one anna levy should be levied from all the affiliated unions.

In view of the need for absolute loyalty to the Trade Union Congress and its organisations, the General Secretary appealed to all members of the Executive Committee to stand by the nomination to any office or to any council made by the Trade Union Congress and not allow the authorities to nominate at will representatives of Indian labour without reference to the Trade Union Congress.

The following resolution was carried unanimously:

“That this meeting of the Executive Committee welcomes the movement organised by the officials of the Trade Union Congress executive for the formation of a Central Federation of Bombay Labour and appoints a committee under the draft rules for the purpose of drawing up a constitution for the federation in consultation with the committee already formed for the purpose of establishing a central federation of Bombay workers.”

It was resolved that a subcommittee should be constituted to draft a Trade Union Bill.

It was resolved to refer the question of affiliation to the International Federation of Trade Unions to the above committee.

Discussion of the draft constitution was deferred to the next meeting.

Fourth Meeting, 6 July 1921:

Mr M. Sudhak was appointed Organising Secretary with a salary of Rs 250 per mensem.

Fifth Meeting, 30 July 1921:

A meeting of the All-India Trade Union Congress Executive Committee was held at the Servants of India Society's Hall, Bombay, on 30 July, Lala Lajpat Rai presiding. Among the important matters transacted were the following:

(1) The Report of the Accounts Subcommittee was submitted and passed, and it was decided to print and circulate the statement of accounts of the Trade Union Congress forthwith.

(2) Lala Lajpat Rai, who had been chosen at the last congress as the representative of the organised workers of India to the International Labour Conference, informed the committee that, as he was unable to proceed to Geneva, he would tender his resignation. Thereupon Mr N. M. Joshi was nominated as a workers' representative to the Geneva International Labour Conference. The advisers chosen remain as at first decided: Messrs Chaman Lall and B. P. Wadia.

(3) Messrs B. G. Horniman and Shapurji Saklatvala were appointed as the sole accredited fraternal delegates to the British Trades Union Congress to be held in September 1921.

(4) The constitution which is to guide the next congress was discussed, amended and passed.

(5) It was decided that the second Trade Union Congress should be held at Jharia, the Bihar coalfield centre, in the month of November.

(6) Mr J. Baptista, Vice-President of the Trade Union Congress, was chosen the President of the next session to be held in November.

Manifesto to the Workers of India

Workers of India!

The time has come for you to assert your right as arbiters of your country's destiny. You cannot stand aloof from the stream of national life. You cannot refuse to face the events that are making history today for India. You are the mass of the population. Every movement on the political chess-board, every step in the financial or economical arrangements of your country, affects you more than it affects any other class. You must become conscious of your responsibilities. You must understand your rights. You must prepare yourselves to realise your destiny.

Workers of India! Your lot is a hard one. How will you better it? Look at the slaves of the Assam tea plantations, now become desperate. Their real daily wages are less than three annas a day prescribed under government acts. They are often victims of brutal treatment, working under the lash of unlimited hours, while some of these plantations pay 20 to 40 per cent dividends. They are death and starvation dividends and it is you, your wives, your children who are the innocent unoffending victims. We call upon you to realise the meaning of this exploitation and offer by special levies from the members of each union what help you can to Mr C. F. Andrews who is fighting at Chandpur the battle of these semislaves.

Workers of India! The earth is your common heritage. It is not specially reserved for professional politicians or the Simla bureaucrats, or the millowning plutocrats. When

your nation's leaders ask for SWARAJ you must not let them leave you out of the reckoning. Political freedom to you is of no worth without economic freedom. You cannot therefore afford to neglect the movement for national freedom. You are part and parcel of that movement. You will neglect it only at the peril of your liberty.

Workers of India! There is nothing in the nature of your union membership to prevent you from joining the Indian National Congress. You will continue to suffer as your Assam comrades are suffering for upholding the cause of freedom. Your masters will go out of their way, as Sir William Vincent has done, to threaten those of your leaders who happen to be noncooperators for an alleged attempt to sow disaffection amongst the workers. You have nothing to fear. It is not a crime to create a repugnance of brutal treatment, of conditions of semislavery and of the horrible exploitation of women and children. You know well enough that it is the influence of these very leaders which has kept the peace and affected a settlement in almost every big strike in India during the past twelve months in spite of every attempt of the employers. Your cause is the cause of humanity. It cannot suffer through misrepresentation.

Workers of India! There is only one thing for you to do. You must realise your unity. You must solidify your organisations. Do not look for salvation to the Factory Act. The law cannot give you unity. The law cannot create in you the spirit of brotherhood. That must be your own work. Spoliation of the workers is the cry of the capitalists in field and factory. Let unity and brotherhood of man be your watchwords. Your salvation lies in the strength of your organisations. Cling fast to them. Cast all weakness from you and you will surely tread the path to power and freedom.

D. CHAMAN LALL

General Secretary,

All-India Trade Union Congress

Appendices

I. NAMES OF MEMBERS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE

Lala Lajpat Rai	Mr Rajaram Gopal
Mr Joseph Baptista	Mr Govind Tukaram
Mr D. Chaman Lall	Mr Shiv Nandan
Mr M. D. Dalvi	Mr G. K. Gadgil
Mr L. R. Tairsee	Mr Venkataram Rele
Mr D. D. Sathye	Mr A. V. Paranjpe
Mr N. D. Sawarkar	Mr Shankar Nachrekar
Mr M. B. Velkar	Mr J. T. Gokhale
Seth Mavji Govindji	Mr C. M. Pareira
Mr F. J. Ginwala	Mr N. J. Rawal
Mr L. G. Khare	Mr Sitaram Shivaji
Mr S. A. Brelvi	Mr S. Satyamurthi
Mr N. M. Joshi	Mr Krishnaram Keshavram Bhatta
Mr Kanji Dwarkadas	Mr C. V. Sawant
Mr E. L. Iyer	Mr Trimback Sitaram Sawant
Mr S. N. Haldar	Mr Tej Singh Bhar
Mr Deep Narayan Singh	Mr Bapu Ramchandra
Mr V. M. Pawar	Mr M. R. Arzoo
Mr B. P. Wadia	Mr R. S. Herlekar
Mr Anantram Vaikunthram	Mr B. K. Kane
Lala Dumichand	Mr Amritlall Sharma
Mr J. B. Miller	Mr N. L. Matkar
Lala Ishwardas Sawhney	Mr Abdulla Rahman Kazi
Mr M. A. Khan	Mr Tukaram Santaji
Mr G. R. Sawhney	Mr J. B. Naik
Mr Kumar Swami Chetty	Mrs Deep Narayan Singh
Mr Vaman Anant Patel	Mr K. Santanam
Mr D. C. Pandit	Lala Jagannath
Mr V. Chakarai Chetty	Mr Shankar Ladoba
Mr Mistry Karam Illahai	Mr Pandurang Sabaji Masurkar
Mr Subramanyam Nayekar	Mr A. B. Kolhatkar

Mr Vinayak Shirodkar

Swami Viswananda

Mr R. K. Misra

Mr J. H. Khanna

Mr G. S. Kanthi

Mr Madhavrao

Mr P. L. Maltekchand

Mrs Avantikabai Gokhale

Miss Chattopadhyaya

Miss Reuben

Mr M. B. Maniar

Mr Jalil Khan

Mrs Gulabchand Deochand

Mr G. A. Pradhan

Mr Nadkarni

(In addition to the above the following names were added at the meeting of the Standing Committee held on 30 July 1921—Messrs Tendulkar, Bhukandas, Murari Lal, Alfonso, Dalvi)

II. LIST OF AFFILIATED AND SYMPATHISING UNIONS

<i>Serial No.</i>	<i>Full title of the Union</i>	<i>Strength of the Union</i>
1	Bombay Oil Workers' Union, Bombay	1,761
2	Chaprasi Union, Bombay	27
3	Bombay Port Trust Railway Staff Union	760
4	GIP Railway Workshop Men's Union	3,700
5	Mechanical Engineers' Association, Amraoti	96
6	Employees' Association, Calcutta	2,505
7	Labour Association, Jamshedpur	4,000
8	Bombay Port Trust Railway Employees' Union	370
9	Handloom Weavers' Union, Bombay	249
10	Bombay Press Workers' Union	1,698
11	Indian Railwaymen's Union, Bhopal	1,600
12	GIP Railwaymen's Union, Kalyan	1,200
13	Dock Workers' Union, Bombay	1,800
14	Indian Seamen's Union, Bombay	12,056
15	Bombay United Textile Workers' Union	204
16	Bombay Textile Workers' Federation	82
17	Parel Labour Union, Bombay	1,500
18	Bombay Port Trust Workshop Union	783
19	Bombay Presidency Postmen's Union	850
20	Bombay Postal Packer's Union	350
21	Bombay Telegraphmen's Union	300
22	Labour Union, Akola	32
23	Valod Labour Union, Kaira	279
24	Millhands' Union, Sholapur	32
25	Mechanical and Pumping Workshop Union, Madras	81
26	Hotel Servants' Union, Bombay	68
27	Mistry and Khandasma Allied Union	32
28	Clerks' Union, Bombay	446
29	Madras Tramwaymen's Union	170
30	Bombay Tramwaymen's Union	2,300
31	Press Workers' Union, Karachi	128
32	Workmen's Union, Kirkee	420
33	National Workmen's Union, Bombay	40

<i>Serial No.</i>	<i>Full title of the Union</i>	<i>Strength of the Union</i>
34	Girmi Kamgar Sangh	1,200
35	Indian Labour League	600
36	Factory Clerks' Union	62
37	Mandvi Servants' Association, Bombay	200
38	BB & CI Railway Workmen's Union	2,000
39	Journalists' Union, Bombay	18
40	RIN Dock Clerks' Union	72
41	Madras Labour Union	800
42	Gas Workers' Union	702
43	NW Railwaymen's Association, Lahore	70,000
44	Clerks' Union, Rawalpindi	60
45	Audit Clerk Union, NW Railway, Lahore	71
46	Talathi Sangh, Ahmednagar	248
47	Cawnpore Majur Sangh	1,800
48	Punjab Clerks' Union, Lahore	122
49	Postal Association, Ahmedabad	113
50	Bombay Presidency Postal Association	72
51	SI Railway Employees' Union, Madras	93
52	Bombay Millhands' Union	52
53	Madras Cooly Union	189
54	BOC Employees' Union, Bombay	802
55	MSM Railwaymen's Union, Madras	812
56	Khand Basar Servants' Union	56
57	GIP Railway Audit Clerks' Union	85
58	Deccan Postal Association, Satara	
59	Clerks' Union, Poona	
60	Talathis' Association, Ratnagiri	
61	Kamgar Hitawardhak Sabha	
62	Bombay Cloth Merchants' Servants' Union	
63	The Mitsui Employees' Union, Miraj	
64	RMS and Postal Employees' Union, Ahmedabad	
65	Bombay Chauffeurs Mutual Benefit Union	
66	Ceylon Workers' Federation, Colombo	
67	Railway Workmen's Association, Ranighat	
68	Press Workers' Union, Delhi	
69	Madras Policemen's Union	
70	Workmen's Union, Karachi	
71	MSM Railway Engineering Workmen's Union, Arkonam	
72	Madras Central Labour Board, Madras	
73	BN Railwaymen's Association, Kharagpur	
74	District Clerks' Union, Amraoti	
75	Railway Workmen's Association, Jamshedpur	
76	Railway Workmen's Association, Jamalpur	
77	Railway Workmen's Association, Allahabad	
78	Railway Workmen's Association, Lucknow	

<i>Serial No.</i>	<i>Full title of the Union</i>	<i>Strength of the Union</i>
79	RMS Association, Madras	
80	UP Postal and RMS Union, Lucknow	
81	Punjab Postmen's Union, Lahore	
82	Postal Clerks' Union, Lahore	
83	Postal and RMS Union, Cawnpore	
84	Military Accounts Association, Poona	
85	The Peons' Association, Poona	
86	Rajnandnagar Millhands' Union, Rajnandnagar	
87	Podanur Ry Employees' Union, Podanur	
88	Coimbatore Labour Union, Coimbatore	
89	Majur Sangh, Gamalpur (CP)	
90	Madras Rikshawalas' Union, Madras	
91	BB & CI Workmen's Union, Ahmedabad	
92	Calcutta Postal Club, Calcutta	
93	Provincial Postal & RMS Association, Lahore	
94	Lokraj Factory Workmen's Union, Jubbulpore	
95	Madras Postmen's Union, Madras	
96	Indian National Seamen's Union, Calcutta	
97	Press Men's Union, Calcutta	
98	Government Press Workers' Peace Establishment Union, Delhi	
99	Press Workers' Union, Lahore	
100	Railway Workmen's Association, Igatpuri (through Mr Pryke)	
101	Railway Workmen's Association, Jhansi (through Mr Laskari)	

Additional List

1	Bombay Port Trust Staff Union (Engineering Dept)	800
2	Wallace Flour Mill Union	150
3	Simplex Mill Union	1,100
4	Oudh and Rohilkhand Railway Union	10,000
5	Globe Mill Union	3,000
6	Indian Seamen's Union, Bombay (additional)	5,944
		<hr/>
		20,994
		<hr/>

III. TRADE UNION CONGRESS ACCOUNTS

(A) 1920 (JULY-NOVEMBER) UP TO THE END OF THE CONGRESS SESSION

<i>Receipts</i>	<i>Rs a p</i>	<i>Disbursements</i>	<i>Rs a p</i>
Bank interest	5- 1- 8	Postage, printing & stationery	888- 3- 0
Sale of tickets and donations	5,387- 2- 0	Badges	210- 0- 0
Donation by Mr Deep N. Singh	1,000- 0- 0	Typing	31- 8- 0
Advance by Mr D. Chaman Lall	172-10- 7	Extras	56- 9- 6
	<hr/>	Aerated water	85- 9- 6
	6,564-14- 3	Tea party to 700 delegates	
		Muzaffarabad Hall bill paid to Vasanji Govindji, caterers	1088-12- 0
Note: Mr D. Chaman Lall makes a donation to the Trade Union Congress of all salaries due to him.		Meeting charges and hire Congress Hall	1643- 4- 0
		Volunteers	155- 3- 9
		Posters and handbills	211- 4- 0
		Victoria, taxi hire for delegates in charge of Mr Anantram	792- 0- 0
		Remuneration	106- 0- 0
		Telegrams	413- 0- 0
		Travelling expenses for a man sent to Poona to deliver address to H.E. the Governor of Bombay	13- 0- 0
		Expenses connected with Presidential Party	202- 0- 0
		Twelve months secretariat travelling and conveyance expenses	672- 0- 0
		Total:	<hr/> 6,564-14- 3

(B) (SINCE CONGRESS SESSION) NOVEMBER 1920 TO SEPTEMBER 1921

<i>Receipts</i>	<i>Rs a p</i>	<i>Disbursements</i>	<i>Rs a p</i>
Advance to		Typewriter	380- 0- 0
Mr M. D. Dalvi	142- 2- 0	Mr Gundgil's salary for	
Owing to tramway		9 months	900- 0- 0
union	344- 4- 0	Furniture & stationery	
Owing to Port		for office	172- 0- 0
Trust Union	220- 0- 0	Office expenses	42-10- 0
Received by Lala		Peon's salary for 9	
Lajpat Rai affi-		months ending October	
liation fees	1500- 0- 0	1921	225- 0- 0
Advanced by Mr		Rent (?) 8 months	
D. Chaman Lall	728- 0- 0	ending September 1921	400- 0- 0
		" " 8	100- 0- 0
		October	
		Expenses, press	
		office, Lahore	517- 1- 0
		Telegram, printing,	
		postage, miscellaneous	142- 1- 0
	2934- 6- 0		2878-12- 0

Note: Mr. D. Chaman Lall makes a donation to the Trade Union Congress of all salaries due to him.

IV. BOMBAY CENTRAL LABOUR FEDERATION

Constitution

Mr Joseph Baptista,	<i>President</i>
Mr N. M. Joshi,	<i>Vice-President</i>
Mr L. R. Tairsee	<i>Treasurers</i>
Mr I. D. Sawhney	
Mr D. Chaman Lall,	<i>Secretary</i>

The Standing Committee shall be in permanent session and shall transact the business of the Executive Committee when the latter is not in session.

The Executive Committee will consist of the above office-bearers and the representatives of affiliated unions at the rate of one member for every thousand of membership or less.

Quorum:

Quorum shall consist of two office-bearers and three others.

Objects:

The objects of the Bombay Central Labour Federation will be the coordination of the activities of the different unions in Bombay and the presidency, the creation of a single executive for the purpose of negotiation, propaganda and organisation of all matters referring to the welfare of the Bombay workers.

Affiliation :

Every bona fide trade union of workers in Bombay Presidency shall be entitled to seek affiliation with the Bombay Central Labour Federation.

Executive Committee Members :

Members of the Executive Committee shall be bona fide trade unionists either paid or honorary officials of, or members of trade unions or of the Standing Committee of the All-India Trade Union Congress.

Meeting of the Executive Committee :

The Executive Committee shall meet once a week. The Organising Committee shall present a weekly report of its activities.

Election of Office-bearers :

Office-bearers shall be elected once a year by the single transferable vote by a delegate meeting of all *affiliated unions* to be held at the time and at the place of holding of the All-India Trade Union Congress. At the annual meeting the secretaries and treasurers will present their reports, and only those unions will be entitled to vote which have been affiliated for at least six months before the holding of the General Meeting.

Portfolios :

The Executive Committee shall proceed to organise the following: (1) Strike and lockout negotiations, (2) Strike organisation, (3) Statistics and publicity, (4) Legal defence, (5) Organisation, (6) Finance, (7) Unemployment and grievances.

A regular register shall be kept of all members of the Central Labour Federation. This register shall be the final determinant of the strength of each affiliated union. This register shall be revised every month by the secretaries.

Strikes :

In the case of strikes every affiliated union shall be at liberty to utilise the services of the Negotiation Committee to be appointed by the member in charge of the Portfolio of Negotiations.

Subscription shall be at the rate of 4 annas per member per year with powers to call for a levy not exceeding another 4 annas during any one year.

Every affiliated union shall be pledged to support the decisions of the Executive Committee of the Bombay Central Labour Federation.

V. ALL-INDIA TRADE UNION CONGRESS

Draft Constitution and Rules

1. *Name*—The name of the organisation shall be the All-India Trade Union Congress.

2. *Object*—The object of the Congress shall be to co-ordinate the activities of all the labour organisations in all the trades and in all provinces in India and generally to further the interests of Indian labour in matters social, political and economic.

3. *Constituents*—The All-India Trade Union Congress organisation shall consist of the following bodies :

- (a) The All-India Trade Union Congress,
- (b) The Executive Council of the All-India Trade Union Congress,
- (c) The Provincial Committees,
- (d) The Labour Unions.

THE ALL-INDIA TRADE UNION CONGRESS

4. *Annual Meeting*—The All-India Trade Union Congress shall meet ordinarily every year in the month of November at such place as may be fixed by Executive Council.

5. *Agenda*—The first day of the Congress shall be devoted to the President's address which shall not exceed 30 minutes, and the presentation and discussion of the Report

of the Executive Council of the past year. The report shall be discussed *seriatim* and not as a whole.

6. The second and the remaining days shall be given to discussion of propositions on the agenda prepared according to rule 7 (below) and other resolutions admitted by the Congress for discussion after the business on the agenda is finished.

7. *Preparation of Agenda*—The agenda of business to be transacted in the Congress, except for the first day, shall be prepared by the Executive Council.

8. *Right of Sending Proposition*—Any union has the right to send not more than 3 propositions or resolutions to be placed on the Congress agenda, but such propositions must be signed by the chairman and the secretary of the union sending them and must reach the secretaries of the Executive Council not later than 12 weeks before the time fixed for the meeting of the Congress.

9. The Executive Council shall have the power to place any propositions not sent by the unions on the agenda of the Congress.

10. The Executive Council shall decide the order in which such propositions shall be discussed at the Congress.

11. The Executive Council shall then send printed copies of such propositions to all the affiliated unions not later than eight weeks before the date fixed for the meeting of the Congress.

12. All amendments to the propositions submitted by the various unions and the Executive Council shall reach the secretaries of the Executive Council not later than four weeks before the meeting of the Congress.

13. The Executive Council shall then print the official agenda containing all propositions and the amendments to them with the names of the unions making the propositions or the amendments, and shall send them to all the affiliated unions not later than two weeks before the meeting of the Congress.

14. *Right of Representation*—Labour unions, by whatever name they may be known, which are affiliated to the Congress, under rule 70 below, and not otherwise disqualified, shall have the right to send delegates to the Congress in the proportion of one delegate for every hundred members or fraction thereof.

15. Only such persons can be elected delegates who are or have been bona fide workers at the trade which they represent and are members of labour unions, or are paid or honorary officials of their unions.

16. The unions shall send the names and addresses of the delegates elected by them to the secretaries of the Executive Council not later than four weeks before the date fixed for the meeting of the Congress.

17. The Executive Council shall have power to nominate not more than 200 delegates to the Congress on the recommendation of the Provincial Committees appointed by the affiliated unions in the province in proportion to the total membership of the unions in the province.

18. The nomination of such delegates shall be made not later than four weeks before the meeting of the Congress.

19. Such nominated delegates shall have to pay a delegation fee of Rs 10 each and shall enjoy all the privileges of a delegate except voting.

20. In the event of Congress deciding upon any foreign or annual cooperative Congress or other delegation, nominations for such delegation must be sent to the secretaries of the Executive Council not later than six weeks prior to the meeting of the Congress.

21. *Congress Officials*—The Chairman of the Executive Council of the past year shall be the President of the Congress, and the Vice-Presidents, Secretary and the Treasurer of the Executive Council of the past year shall be Vice-Presidents, Secretary and the Treasurer of the Congress provided that the office-bearers of the Second Congress shall be elected by the Executive Council at least 8

weeks before the date of the next Congress, and hold office till the meeting of the Congress.

22. These officials shall be ex-officio members of the Congress.

THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

23. The Executive Council of the All-India Trade Union Congress shall consist of the Chairman, a General Secretary and a Treasurer as ex-officio members, and a Vice-President and two members elected by each province separately and any additional member elected under rule 28.

24. The duties of the Executive Council shall be :

- (i) To prepare the agenda for the Congress in accordance with rule 7 above;
- (ii) To coordinate the work and activities of the various unions in the various trades in India;
- (iii) To carry out and enforce the resolutions of the All-India Trade Union Congress;
- (iv) In case of emergency, to levy the affiliated societies pro rata to provide the necessary expense; such levy not to exceed in the aggregate one additional anna per member during the year; and
- (v) Generally to exercise all powers granted by the resolutions of the All-India Trade Union Congress.

25. *Qualifications*—No candidate shall be eligible for election to the Executive Council unless he is a delegate and in the case of a union delegate the union so represented must have contributed towards the expenses of that Council in accordance with rule 71 during the year previous to this election.

26. In no case shall two members of one union be elected on the Executive Council except as under rule 28 below; such condition not to apply to the election of the Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer.

27. The two representatives of the provinces shall not

belong to the same trade: such condition not to apply to the election of the Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer.

28. Unions with membership of 50,000 or over shall be entitled to an additional representative on the Council.

29. *Election of the Executive Council*—The office-bearers and the members of the Executive Council shall be elected by ballot on the last day but one of each Congress.

30. The old office-bearers and members shall be eligible for re-election and shall continue in office until they are re-elected or their successors appointed.

31. *Nomination of Office-bearers and Executive Council*—All nominations for the post of the office-bearers and the Executive Council shall be sent to the General Secretary, duly proposed and seconded, twelve weeks prior to the meeting of the Congress and the list of the names shall be published on the agenda paper of the Congress.

32. *Method of Voting*—The method of voting shall be by card, to be issued to the delegates of labour unions according to membership, on the basis of one vote for every 100 members or major part thereof represented in respect of unions having membership of 10,000, and in respect of unions having membership beyond 10,000 of one additional vote for every 500 or major part thereof.

33. Such cards shall be issued to delegates by the secretary, before the meeting of the Congress.

34. *Ballot*—The ballot papers shall be issued by the secretary, and after being filled up, shall be immediately placed in the box without inspection by the delegates except those of the union voting.

35. Any delegate or delegates found guilty of violating rule 34 above shall at once be reported to the Congress, named by the President and expelled. Such delegate or delegates shall not be eligible to attend the Congress again for three years.

36. In the event of death or resignation of any member of the Executive Council, the Council shall coopt the

candidate who secures the next highest number of votes and is not disqualified under rules 26 and 27 above.

37. *Meetings*—The Executive Council shall meet at Bombay or at such other place as the Chairman and the Secretary decide, ordinarily every three months.

38. A special meeting of the Executive Council may be called on written requisition by 20 members stating the business for which the meeting is convened, or by the President and the Secretary for any special urgent business.

39. Within a week of the receipt of a requisition for special meeting the secretaries shall issue notice calling the meeting a fortnight hence.

40. A clear fortnight's notice is necessary for all meetings, special or ordinary.

41. *Quorum*—The quorum at ordinary meetings shall be 11, at special meetings 21.

42. The Executive Council shall meet at the place where the Congress is to be held at least 2 days before the meeting of the Congress and shall assist the local committee in making all arrangements for the Congress.

43. The Executive Council shall nominate 200 delegates to the Congress on the recommendation of the Provincial Committees under rule 18 above, at least four weeks before the meeting of the Congress.

OFFICE-BEARERS

44. *Chairman*—The Chairman shall be elected by the Congress under rule 29 and shall hold office for one year.

45. The Chairman shall preside at all the meetings of the Executive Council and also at the session of the Congress of the year after his election.

46. The Chairman shall represent the Congress on all occasions and shall be ex-officio member of all subcommittees of the Executive Council and also of the Provincial Committee for the Province in which he ordinarily resides.

47. *Vacancy*—Should the Chairman resign or should a

vacancy occur otherwise before the end of the period, the Executive Council shall elect a Chairman from among the various Vice-Presidents.

48. *General Secretary*—The General Secretary shall be ex-officio member of the Executive Council and of all the subcommittees of the Council and also of the Provincial Committee for the Province in which he ordinarily resides.

49. He shall be a wholtime paid servant of the Congress.

50. The pay of the General Secretary shall be fixed by the Executive Council.

51. He shall hold office for such period as the Executive Council of the Congress fixes.

52. The Executive Council shall provide the Secretary an office and a sufficient number of clerical and other staff to enable them to carry out their business efficiently. The expenses of the office shall be paid by the Council.

The Secretary shall be in charge of all correspondence of the Congress, shall keep regular minutes of meetings and prepare the Annual Report for submission to the Congress.

53. The Annual Report shall, besides other matters, contain the number of meetings of the Council held with dates, and the names of the members who attended them.

54. No report shall be presented to the Congress until it has been discussed and approved by the Executive Council.

55. Should a vacancy occur between the annual meetings of the Congress, the Executive Council shall have power to fill the vacancy.

56. *Treasurer*—The treasurer shall hold office for a year.

57. He shall be in charge of the finances of the Congress and shall sign all cheques countersigned by the Secretaries.

58. He shall prepare the balancesheets, have them audited by auditors appointed by the Congress and then send printed copies of the balancesheets to all the affiliated unions not later than two weeks before the meeting of the Congress.

59. *Vice-Presidents*—One Vice-President shall be elected for each province by the representatives of that province assembled at the Congress separately.

60. The Vice-Presidents shall take steps to organise the Provincial Committees in their own provinces and shall be the chairmen of their committees.

61. In the absence of the Chairman a Vice-President shall preside at the meetings of the Executive Council.

THE PROVINCIAL COMMITTEE

62. In every province a Provincial Committee shall be organised by the Vice-President for that province who shall be the chairman ex-officio of the committee.

63. These committees shall consist of elected representatives of the trade unions in the province which are affiliated to the Congress.

64. Every Provincial Committee shall frame its own rules and regulations for election of deputies from the trade unions but shall not be empowered to make any sort of differentiation in favour of any trade or union.

65. The Provincial Committees shall submit their rules to the Executive Council for approval.

66. Any rule inconsistent with the aims and policy of the Congress shall be ipso facto null and void.

67. They shall send periodical reports of the condition of labour in their respective provinces to the Executive Council.

68. They shall make all efforts possible to organise all classes of labour in their own provinces.

69. They shall take all steps necessary to further the cause of labour under the guidance of the Executive Council.

LABOUR UNIONS

70. Every organisation of labour, under whatever name it may be known, shall be entitled to affiliation to the Con-

gress by making a payment of one anna for every member of the Union, probationary, free or otherwise, annually.

71. No union shall be entitled to send delegates to the Congress unless it has paid all its dues to the Congress at least eight weeks before the meeting of the Congress, and only then shall Credential Cards be issued to it.

MISCELLANEOUS

72. *Auditor*—The Congress shall elect an auditor.

73. The auditor shall have access to all papers and documents relating to the income and expenses of the Executive Council, necessary for the purpose of auditing.

74. The financial year shall begin on 1 July and end on 30 June every year.

75. *Arrangements for Congress*—A committee shall be formed at the place where the next Congress is to be held, not later than the month of September to make all arrangements for the Congress.

76. All surplus money after paying off all the expenses of the Congress remaining in the hands of the committee shall be handed over to the Executive Council for its general purposes.

77. *Limitation of Speeches*—The mover of a proposition shall be allowed ten minutes, the seconder seven and all other speakers five minutes.

78. A delegate shall be allowed to speak once only on any proposition except the mover who shall have the right of reply.

79. All amendments to propositions must be taken in order in which they are printed.

80. Should the President of the Congress consider there is no practical difference of opinion among the delegates, he shall have power to stop further discussion and submit the proposition to the Congress.

81. The President shall have power to accept or refuse

a motion for closure if he thinks the matter has been sufficiently discussed or not.

82. *Voting*—On a motion being put to the Congress, the President shall call for show of hands in favour of and against the motion and declare the result. But if any delegate challenges a division then the voting shall be by cards issued to the delegates of labour unions, according to rule 32.

83. *Special Committees*—Special Committees shall be appointed to deal with questions affecting the different industries, and when the propositions are of a technical character they shall be remitted to the committees composed of representatives from the unions whose members are engaged in the industry to which the proposition refers, who shall fully consider the same and report to the Congress or to the Executive Council.

84. *Dealing with Disputes*—Any union engaged in a dispute and considering itself aggrieved by reason of another union assisting to defeat those on strike, may report the circumstances to Executive Council who may then take such steps as the circumstances may warrant, and should the charge be proved, the offending union shall be charged with all costs.

85. *Special Session of Congress*—The Executive Council shall have power to call a special session of the Congress besides the ordinary annual session, whenever it deems necessary.

86. *Amendment of Rules*—Should any amendment of the rules of the Congress be proposed by a union, such amendment must be forwarded to the Executive Council at least twelve weeks before the meeting of the Congress.

87. Should any union make a charge against another union and after due investigation, fail to prove the same, it shall bear the whole cost of the investigation including the expenses incurred by the defendant union, and if in the opinion of the Executive Council the charge be a false one,

wilfully and knowingly made, the union in addition to bearing the expenses shall be liable to fine not exceeding Rs 200.

88. Should any union make a charge against another one, and the union against which the charge is made refuses to investigate the same, such union shall be deemed guilty and be reported to the Congress.

Any union refusing to pay the expenses or fine as laid down by this rule shall be reported to Congress.

In no case shall the rules be suspended unless agreed to by two-thirds of the delegates voting.

SECOND AITUC SESSION

Jharia,

30 November to 2 December 1921

Between First and Second Congress

The first session of the AITUC was held in Bombay on 30 October 1920.

The second session of the AITUC was held in Jharia on 30 November 1921.

In the period between the first and the second congress, the freedom movement had gathered enormous momentum. The anti-imperialist, anti-British actions of the masses had begun to take concrete political and economic content. The actions of the working class and the peasantry and the town poor had begun to acquire the character of revolutionary uprisings.

The Indian National Congress led by Mahatma Gandhi gave the political and organisational slogans to the movement. Their influence is reflected in the reports and resolutions and speeches of the second session of the AITUC.

Where, however, the workers and peasants put their own class content in the freedom movement, they were pulled up and asked to keep to the mandates of the national leadership.

The strikes during this period were both political and economic and very militant in character, sometimes amounting to uprisings. In 1921 alone there were 396 strikes and lockouts involving 600,351 workers, with a loss of 6,984,426 working days.

After the first session of the AITUC, the National Congress met in Nagpur in December 1920 and adopted the

noncooperation resolution. It asked students to boycott schools and colleges, lawyers to boycott law courts; boycott of foreign goods and use of swadeshi goods was adopted.

The Congress also made a vow that swaraj would be attained in one year, i.e. by 31 December 1921.

The British rulers thought that the movement could be mollified by the new political reforms based on the war-time promises and the Montagu-Chelmsford Report. To inaugurate them, the Prince of Wales was brought to India.

The Congress decided to proclaim a total boycott of his visit. On the day of his landing, almost a total general strike and hartal took place in the whole country. The industrial towns like Bombay, Calcutta, Madras were completely on strike on 17 November 1921. This was perhaps the first all-national political general strike in India.

In Bombay, where the Prince of Wales landed, besides the general strike, barricades were raised to fight the police, the territorial army and the regular soldiery that was sent to quell the strike and uprising. The strike and fighting lasted from 17 November to 21 November 1921. The *Daily Herald*, the Labour paper in England, called it "the strongest of uprisings". During this struggle, the official estimate is that 30 people were shot dead in Bombay alone.

The movement in the cities was accompanied by peasant uprisings in the countryside. The *Eka* movement of the peasants of Uttar Pradesh (the United Provinces, as it was then called) was very widespread and militant. In their meetings peasant speakers openly called for killing of the district magistrates and driving out the British.

Under the leadership of the *Eka* Union, the peasants put forward demands which were in the interests of wide sections of the rural population—the poorest and middle tenants and partly of those who owned land. This is seen from the platform of the union as published in the *Indian Daily News* on 10 March 1922. It called on the peasants to

refuse to leave the fields when they were unlawfully appropriated, to pay only the fixed rent and to demand a receipt for payment, to do no work for the landlords without pay, to use the water from the ponds free of charge, to allow their livestock to graze in jungles and on other lands, etc. They had, however, not come to the stage of demanding abolition of landlordism.

Fearing that the revolt might affect very wide sections of the army, signs of which were seen in the Punjab in 1919, the British ruling class promulgated the Rent Act for Oudh, 1921, in which permanent occupancy rights were conferred on a small section. In spite of this the movement spread further.

During the course of this movement, traditional orthodox casteism was set aside by the peasantry and a very wide unity was achieved. Much of the leadership in the Oudh area came from the lower castes, particularly the Passis in the eastern districts. Passi Madari and Sohrab were famous names.

In Punjab, the vast landed estates of the gurdwaras had become the private domains of the mahants, who oppressed the Akali peasants. The mahants' armed gangs carried out massacres of Akali peasants who fought for the reformation of the gurdwaras and reduction of rent and abolition of begar. The massacre of the Nankana Sikh peasants in February 1921 in which 200 Sikhs were killed is notorious in the history.

In Malabar, the peasants rose in armed revolt in August 1921, in what is known as the Moplah rebellion. It was suppressed by military force in which 3266 Moplahs were killed.

Mahatma Gandhi disapproved the Bombav uprising, saying, "The swaraj that I have witnessed during the last two days has stunk in my nostrils."

The Congress leadership also addressed an appeal to the peasants in which it said: "They must not use sticks and

knives... must not plunder the estates, the peasants must win the stonehard hearts of their enemies, by their kindness and love.”

The mass movement was also giving birth to a nationwide volunteer movement. It is these Congress volunteers who organised the boycotts and hartals. They had assumed the form of a “nonviolent army for swaraj”. But their active part in the hartals was frowned upon by the British, as also some Congress leaders.

By the uprisings of the peasantry following the nationwide general strikes of 17 November 1921, the anti-imperialist revolution had taken a great stride forward.

In Europe, the Soviet Union, under the leadership of Lenin and the Bolshevik Party, had smashed the imperialist intervention and the counterrevolution. The socialist revolution had begun consolidating its victories.

The working class in Europe was also carrying forward its postwar upsurge, though the trade union movement there had split in two, one led by the International Federation of Trade Unions with its headquarters in Amsterdam (IFTU) and the other led by the Red International of Labour Unions (RILU) with its headquarters in Moscow.

As a result of imperialist intervention, civil war and sabotage of the dispossessed landlords aided by the kulaks, the Russian peasants were caught in the grip of famine and typhus.

The Jharia session of the AITUC adopted a resolution giving token aid to the people of the Soviet Union.

By the end of 1921, there were over 100 big trade unions in India.

A miners' strike, which began during the session of the AITUC, ended in the victory of the workers, in which they got 50 per cent wage increase.

It was in this setting that the second session of the AITUC met in Jharia on 30 November 1921.

Proceedings

The Second All-India Trade Union Congress commenced its sitting on Wednesday 30 November at 1 P.M. at a beautiful and picturesque pandal erected for the purpose at Jharia, the centre of coal mines in India. The pandal was of bamboo structure made in a semicircle, visitors and delegates having their accommodation in a series of rows radiating from the platform. The whole place was gaily decorated in khadi cloth and a great majority of the people wore khadi and Gandhi caps. Apart from few chairs for the few European visitors everybody including the President squatted either on the floor or on the dais which were covered with khadi cloth. The delegates coming from different parts of the country were present in large numbers representing practically all branches of labour in India. The members of the general public also attended in numbers. The place reserved for visitors was packed with miners, men, women and even children. The special feature was the presence of a large number of women workers. At the lowest computation more than 50 thousand people attended and in each of the next two successive days' sittings the number of visitors and delegates swelled in number.

Just at one o'clock Mr Joseph Baptista, the President-elect accompanied by Mr Ramjash Agarwalla, Chairman, Reception Committee, Mr Chaman Lall, the General Secre-

tary, and many labour leaders entered the pandal in procession amidst deafening cheers.

Prominent among those on the dais were: Swami Viswananda, Babu Shyamsunder Chakravarty, Swami Darsanananda, Hardevdas Agarwalla, D. D. Tacker, Karamshi Khora, Keshavji Pitambar, Madhabji Jivan, Lala Narain Singh, Nibaran ch. Sircar, Seth Chhaganlal K. Parekh, Dr Daulat Ram, Srimati Savitri Devi, Mr E. L. Iyer, Mr Jalil Khan, Messrs I. B. Sen, M. D. Dalvi, D. Chaman Lall, Prof. Kaushik of Bombay, and Messrs Thengdi, J. H. Pattinson, Simpson, Gilchrist, and R. A. Mucadum.

The proceedings opened with the singing of labour and national songs, and the singing of the "Bande Mataram" sung by Mr Gadgil, Assistant Secretary. Mr Ramjash Agarwalla, Chairman of the Reception Committee, then delivered his address in Hindi (printed copy of which both in Hindi and English was distributed) welcoming the delegates. His address was a masterpiece coming, as it did, from one of the most prominent colliery owners of Jharia, and was punctuated with frequent cheers and applause.

As the voice of Mr Agarwalla did not carry very far Swami Darsanananda, of Raneegunj coalfield fame, in his stentorian voice explained briefly and very ably the main portions of the chairman's address in Hindi.

ELECTION OF PRESIDENT

Mr Ramjash Agarwalla then formally proposed the election of the President.

Mr Shyamsunder Chakravarty, Editor *Servant*, Calcutta, in seconding the resolution in a speech in Hindi thanked the assembly of labour, which he said was the bone and flesh of the nation, the real fountain of life of the whole country. In electing Mr Joseph Baptista as their President, he said, they had elected a man in whom every section of labour in India had its confidence. Joseph Baptista was the

first and foremost chela (disciple) of the late revered Lokamanya Tilak (*cries of Tilak Maharaj ki Jai!*), his righthand man, who had been working unceasingly for the last several years for the amelioration of the condition of labour and who had always been an ardent and staunch friend of labour. His name was familiar to every newspaper reader as a stout champion and a keen fighter for the rights of the working classes and he was one who had been selfless and sacrificing as a protagonist of workers in India. Who was not aware, he said, of his efforts towards the establishment of a "national post office" in India? He was one of the foremost exponents of the presentday socialism in India. Dwelling upon the present political condition of the country he said with the freedom of the country the condition of labour would be improved and Joseph Baptista had given his life to the uplift of labour side by side with the movement for swaraj. There could be no man fitter than he to occupy the chair of the President (*cheers*).

Mr Deep Narayan Singh of Bhagalpore in a short speech in Hindi supporting the Presidential election impressed so effectively on the grimy illiterate audience the necessity of keeping discipline and order even when their patience was put to the severest strain, that even when the President took nearly an hour in delivering his speech in English there was pindrop silence in that crowd even if they did not understand a word of it.

Mr Singh said that foreign domination was the greatest evil in the world. Subjection, he said, is at the root of all evils. There was subjection of one country by another and of one class by another, and it was because of this, that they had this sad spectacle of misery and penury all around them. Mr Joseph Baptista was one of the few Indians who really understood the heart of political problems of these times. He had been fighting against class supremacy involving the subjection of workers. He was a great friend to the cause of labour. By his persistent and strenuous labour

he had endeared himself to the workers of Bombay and outside so much so that in Bombay every worker knew him not as Mr Baptista but as "Kaka (uncle) Baptista" and workers of this country would surely come into their own with his leadership. They, he said, were the producers of the world's wealth and they were today no better than slaves. They must no longer remain contented with their present lot and he hoped that through this trade union they would obtain their freedom.

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

The President was then garlanded and climbed the rostrum amid cheers. He delivered his address extempore in English.

At the conclusion of his address great enthusiasm prevailed. Every time "swaraj", "Gandhi", "Ali Brothers" were mentioned in his address the coalminers and audience cheered to the echo.

Prof. Kaushik of Bombay and Mr Shyamsunder Chakravarty of the *Servant* then explained briefly the substance of the President's speech in Hindi and in Bengali respectively.

This brought the day's proceedings to a close. The congress stood adjourned till 1 P.M. the following day.

SECOND DAY'S SITTING

The second All India Trade Union Congress resumed its sitting for the second day at 1 P.M.

The attendance of delegates and visitors beat previous day's record.

The proceedings began with national songs.

Mr Chaman Lall, the General Secretary, then read out several messages and letters of sympathy from various labour associations abroad and other Indian leaders. Following are the names of some of them: The letter from the

office of the British Bureau of the Red Trade Union International is worth mentioning and will prove an interesting reading.

MESSAGES FROM BRITISH LABOUR

Workers' Welfare League of India (London); Scottish Trades Union Congress; Irish Labour Party and Trades Union Congress (Dublin); Miners' Federation of Great Britain; Mr Bowerman, M.P. (London); Norwich Labour Party Industrial Council; E. L. Polton, Esq. (London); Elizabeth Wilson (Leicester); George Kempton (London); Independent Labour Party (London), G. C. Briston, Esq.; General Union of Textile Workers (Huddersfield); Kettering Trades and Labour Council; Alfred Hill (Leicester); National Federation of Building Trade Operatives (London); G. L. Page, Indian Trades Union (Mombasa).

LETTERS AND TELEGRAMS OF SYMPATHY FROM INDIAN LEADERS

Mr C. R. Das, Lala Lajpat Rai, Mrs Sarojini Naidu, Mrs Sarala Devi Choudhurani, Avantikabai Gokhale, Pandit Motilal Nehru, Mr Aswini Kumar Dutt, Mr J. L. Banerjee, Mr S. Satyamurti, Pandit Rajendra Prasad, Mr S. A. Brelvi of *Bombay Chronicle*, Seth Jannalal Bajaj, Dr M. B. Welkar, Mr Gopal Achari, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Lala Gobardhan Das, Sardar P. Singh, Sadbhans of the Punjab, Mr V. M. Pawar, Bar-at-law, Mr Chandika Prasad (Ajmere), K. V. Joshi, Singaravelu, F. J. Ginwala, S. H. Jhabwala, Dr N. D. Sawarkar, G. S. Kanthi, Kanji Dwarkadas.

RESOLUTION I

Mr D. Chaman Lall then moved the first resolution of the day: "That this Trade Union Congress declares that the

time has now arrived for the attainment of swaraj by the people of India.”

Mr Chaman Lall in moving the above resolution said: People say that there was no relation between swaraj and labour, while there were others who were of opinion that there ought to be no connection between labour and swaraj. But when the speaker asked the miners and labour representatives present whether they wanted swaraj the response was spontaneous and tremendous. Swaraj, he said, was not for those who rolled in luxury, drove in motorcars or dined at Government House, but for those millions of human beings who by their labour filled the pockets of the rich and the wealthy. They were the real prop of the capitalists.

Continuing the speaker said, just as a human being could not live without air, so no human being—no nation—can live without freedom, without swaraj and without which no nation could grow. It was the exploiters, the wealthy European merchants, who were draining away India's wealth and compelling Indians to die of starvation. It was they—the European and Indian capitalists who did not want swaraj, because they knew swaraj was not for them. It was for those (pointing to the miners)—they were the hope and mainstay of the country,—those brothers and sisters sitting over there. And the swaraj they would have was not be the swaraj of the capitalists but the swaraj of the workers (*cheers*). India's political servitude was due to her economic subjection and the combined effort of organised labour would destroy that subjection and restore India's freedom and give labour dignity and proper place in society (*loud and prolonged cheers*).

Mr E. L. Iyer, Editor, *Swadharma*, Madras, supported the resolution in English. He said: “I am sorry I do not know your language and the few things I have got to say I will say in English. I would like to tell you in support of this resolution of the three occurrences by the government in

three different parts of India. First, the behaviour of the Bengal government in the Surma Valley Tea Estate. There, gentlemen, when several of our brothers didn't want to work in the plantations and they wanted to go home and they found themselves baulked up at Coalundo and some other places and couldn't get away. The government would not help them because they said that they were neutral in all cases of disputes between capital and labour.

"Gentlemen, I would like to tell you about the conduct of the Madras electric employees—there the Madras government said they would help the capitalists because it was a public utility concern and the public would be inconvenienced and it was the duty of the government to support the capitalists so that the public might not be inconvenienced. Gentlemen, that was the attitude of the Madras government during the Electric Supply Corporation Strike and as a consequence of that the union has collapsed and I am told that the employees are now far worse off than what they were before. In the third instance, during the recent strike of Buckingham and Carnatic Mill employees in Madras the government, that is to say, the Commissioner of Labour Mr Moir, actively helped the capitalists in securing black-leg labour for the English company. Gentlemen, the government pretended that everyone who wants to go to work must be at perfect liberty to break the strike and go to work, and if the government could not get black-legs, they 'set up' Commissioner for Labour.

"Gentlemen, that is a strong statement to make, but that was made by a member of the Madras Legislative Council in the council meeting itself. The government set up one caste against the other—they got the adidrauids to work at the mills and broke the strike. So that till now the Madras Central Labour Board had one definite rule that it would not interfere or take part in any political movement in this country. But we have found after the conduct of the Madras government during the Buckingham and Carnatic

Mill Strike that it is an impossible attitude to take. The capitalists will be supported by the government at any need and at any emergency. Here I am told that the owners of these mines through the Mining Federation passed a resolution to prevent this meeting, and said that there would be tremendous uproar if this meeting was held and on that account soldiery was brought in, armoured cars were brought in and all the paraphernalia of war of the government marched up in front of them on this road that we might see and realise the force of governmental power behind the exploiting capitalists (*hear, hear*).

“Therefore, gentlemen, there is no use keeping labour and capital in two watertight compartments. You cannot make it. For one thing, swaraj means, as Mr Chaman Lall explained to you, swaraj for the workers, swaraj for the poor of this land. Therefore you must not and you cannot keep labour from the sway and current of Indian politics. Secondly, even if you try you cannot break them into part and parcel. They are carried away by political currents that are swaying the land just now.

“Gentlemen, Lord Curzon during his administration made it perfectly clear that administration and exploitation go hand in hand. And as a matter of fact wherever you turn you find that maxim put into practice. It may not be preached in so many words but it is put into practice. With these words, gentlemen, I give my wholehearted support to the resolution (*cheers*).”

Mr Miller, President, OR Rly Union, in supporting the resolution in Hindi said: Ireland for the Irish, Britain for the British and India for the Indians—that was what the labour of India wanted. When the speaker asked the audience whether they wanted swaraj or not, spontaneous cries of “Yes” burst forth from the vast assembly. But what kind of swaraj he questioned, capitalist or labour. The only answer was “workers’ swaraj”. The speaker heartily and emphatical-

ly supported the resolution because, he said, without swaraj the condition of labour would not be improved (*loud cheers*).

Mr Narain Lal of Patna following said that the swaraj they wanted, the swaraj Mahatma Gandhi (*cries of Mahatma Gandhi ji ki jai!*) wanted was for them. If they had swaraj, if the country was in their hands then their misery would have been long relieved. The government say their leaders wanted swaraj for their own private ends; but they all know that it was for them—the poor and the miserable, that swaraj was necessary and urgent.

Continuing the speaker said they all raised their hands when the previous speaker asked them if they wanted swaraj. Let those hands, he said, not come down. The President said that they might not have swaraj within the year but the speaker was of opinion that swaraj they had even then and that swaraj the government with all the paraphernalia of oppression and repression would not be able to crush or check. "Brothers", he said, "if you want swaraj then remember and be ready—the time has come. Remain peaceful and worship charka, and god willing you will have achieved your aim" (*prolonged cries of Mahatma Gandhi-ji-ki-Jai*).

Mr K. C. Choudhury of Bengal in supporting the above resolution in Hindi said that they wanted swaraj first, because they wanted to repeal the laws, the criminal laws that had been passed by the bureaucracy in 1858. In these days, he said, the coolies were taken to be like so many beasts of burden. At that time it was an unlawful assembly for ten persons to meet together. To remove that from the statute book they wanted swaraj. Secondly, there was another law. Breach of contract regarding labour, they wanted to change that law and for that they wanted swaraj. It was for the removal of such penal laws, it was to change the social order of the working classes that they wanted swaraj. To remove forced labour and beggary they wanted swaraj. It was to prevent their employers from calling the help of

police and military who are at their beck and call every now and then to suppress and break strikes that they wanted swaraj. They wanted the railways to be nationalised, they wanted the nationalisation of mines, municipalisation of tramways, gas and electric works and it was for that they wanted swaraj. But the first and foremost reason for which swaraj was necessary was to make the price of foodstuffs cheap (*hear, hear*).

Continuing the speaker said they wanted the exportation of the surplus only. They wanted to stop the exportation of the necessaries of life and for that they wanted swaraj. It was to fix the minimum wages and maximum hours of labour that they wanted swaraj. Finally the speaker said, it was for the amelioration of the condition of labour apart from anything else, that they wanted swaraj (*cheers*).

Then a young daughter of Mr Ramjash Agarwalla, a girl of nine, recited a highly patriotic poem which kept the house spell-bound for several minutes.

Mr K. P. Sen Sinha in rising to support the resolution said in Hindi: My brother coolies and sisters, look at yourselves. You have no food, no clothes in this winter, you are without any raiment worth the name to protect you from cold—about 90 per cent of you. In our days of freedom we clothed the whole world. What a shame! Happy and contented India which used to clothe the whole world now depends solely upon foreigners to cover her nakedness to her eternal shame. You labourers of India, if you want to live like men promise in your heart of hearts to win swaraj, let this be the very breath of your life, try for it peacefully and nonviolently. Friends, look at your miserable conditions, and know you can only have it removed when you have your swaraj. The dawn of swaraj is in sight and you will have it within 31st December (*continued cheers and cries of Gandhi Maharaj-ki-jai!*).

Next Mr Mahammed Daud, President, Seamen's Union, Calcutta, in supporting the resolution in a short speech in

Hindi said: the conditions of labour could never be improved without swaraj. There were three or four laws, the Workmen's Breach of Contract Act, the Madras Labour Act, the Madras Act of 1860, the Assam Labour Migration Act, which were inimical to the interest of labour. They were forged at the instance of the capitalists to keep the labour slaves eternal to their employers. The speaker said they wanted a repeal of those legislations but the present government would not, and it was for this they wanted swaraj. If these laws were allowed to remain any longer in the statute book the condition of labour would grow worse.

Referring to the Taff Vale Railway Strike in England and the injunction suit against the President of the Madras Labour Union he said, in England in that Taff Vale case they influenced the Parliament and so they could change the legislation and they did put an end to the dispute in 1906. But so far as Madras was concerned they could not do anything. They could not influence the legislation of this country until and unless they had got their own national government. Continuing he said: "If we live in this state of affairs if we cannot get swaraj, do you think that the labour of this country, the condition of the workingmen of India, will be ameliorated by any means."

Referring to the recommendations of the International Labour Conference held at Geneva in 1921 he asked "What did the government do?" The Peace Treaty said that the government is bound to accept the recommendation of the International Labour Conference held at Geneva. Now, they are not in a position to ratify the recommendations of the International Labour Conference. Is it not a shame on their part when their delegates were present at the deliberations of the International Labour Conference and when they did not object to the passing of that recommendations and draft convention? Then what are we to do? We are to do this thing—that we must have a national government, we must have swaraj. And if we can get swaraj the condi-

tion of labour, local and international, will be ameliorated and there would be perfect peace and harmony between the people of this country and the outside world.

Swaraj is the cry of the day but whether the swaraj will be for the rich or for the educated or for the workmen? From the statistics of India we know that only 10 per cent of our people are educated, 90 per cent illiterate and the workmen fall under that 90 per cent. Now whether this 90 per cent will get swaraj or not? Whether the swaraj will be for the educated or for the labour? This congress as a representative of workmen must demand that we must have our swaraj for the workers—the workers of the India and not for the educated or for the rich people of our country (*cheers*).

Mr M. Thengdi (CP) then supported the resolution in English. He said: Gentlemen of the educated and capitalist classes, I have to thank you first for taking such a keen interest in the welfare of labour. On behalf of labour in general I am doing this—I myself being a labourer if not a miner. The resolution that has been placed before you has been moved, seconded and supported. But I want to place before you a word of warning and before the capitalists of this country specially, so that if they are thinking to put down this labour movement in this country for their own interest, I assure them it is an impossible task for them. The capitalist class may be thinking that the government which is also a capitalist government will help them (*great uproar prevailed; nothing could be heard from the press table*)...

The speaker said that if the capitalist classes were thinking that the government would help them in putting down the labour movement, it was an impossibility. The various letters and cablegrams that their secretary had read before them—from those it was perfectly clear that there were other forces working out of India and outside the British empire for the amelioration of the condition of labour all

over the world over which the British power and might had no control. He then warned the capitalists to take note of what he said before it was too late.

The speaker continuing interpreted the resolution to mean that even the labourers of India, generally apathetic to such a high movement as swaraj, they were also formulating their claim for swaraj.

Continuing he said: The resolution as it reads should mean that although the political movement of this country is initiated and led by the educated and upper classes of this country, time has come when even the most uneducated classes of India—the labouring classes are taking cognisance of the world's progress and of their own progress and advocating the establishment of swaraj here (*hear, hear*). I want the capitalistic classes to take note. So long as you found that the intelligentsia and the educated classes of this country are naturally in a minority you thought you would prevent—you would stem the tide towards swaraj. But now that the rank and file—the uneducated mass—the labouring classes have thrown in their lot for the achievement of their common aspiration, it would be very difficult for you to stem that tide (*cheers*).

RESOLUTION II

“That this Trade Union Congress recommends India to adopt swadeshi and encourage both hand spinning and hand weaving.”

Srimati Savitri Devi of Darjeeling in a very forceful and highly appealing speech in Hindi moved the above resolution. She said that charka was like the symbol of Sudarshan chakra of Lord Srikrishna. They had no other sinews of war—war materials they had none except this only weapon charka in their fight for freedom: and as the despotism of King Kansa was destroyed by means of Sudarshan chakra so the charka of theirs would act as that divine wheel in

cutting off their fetters of subjection and restoring them to their ancient life of simplicity, plenty and freedom.

She depicted in glowing terms the horrors of Punjab atrocities and dwelt at length upon the importance of Hindu-Moslem unity and exhorted the audience to win swaraj by perfectly peaceful and nonviolent means. Continuing she said, two things were necessary in their fight—one was a pure heart and the other was charka—and they must not stop till they had won swaraj. God was always with them (*continued cheers*).

Baba Khalil Das (Bihar) in a short speech in Hindi seconded the resolution. India, he said, had a great message to deliver to the world and he exhorted the audience to serve to the best of their ability as by serving India they would be serving Humanity.

Mr Jogesh Chandra Bhattacharya (Chittagong) in supporting the resolution said "The sun of swaraj has already risen. You shall have to keep the flag flying. If you do not win swaraj by your own efforts nobody can give it to you. My brother workers, have your own clothes spun, and woven by your hands to cover your nakedness."

Pandit Bajrang Sahay next supporting the resolution said if they wanted to have swaraj, how could they have it when they depended for their very raiments upon Manchester. How could they, he asked, welcome the goddess of freedom with that impure foreign thing on? They had no right, nor the strength to win her without swadeshi.

Pandit Murari Lal of Cawnpore having supported the resolution in Hindi it was put to the meeting and was carried unanimously. Even the Europeans who attended raised their hands in approbation.

RESOLUTION III

The resolution regarding the condition of Bengal and Bihar miners was moved by Swami Darsanananda of

Raneegunj coalfield. He humorously began by saying that he was a moderate and would speak of cooperation. Addressing the mineowners, he asked their cooperation in improving the miserable condition of the miners by introducing the system of provident fund, prohibiting sale of liquor within the colliery areas, establishing schools for their children, arranging proper housing, etc. Addressing the miners he exhorted them to work for swaraj and to be prepared to suffer for the cause even at the risk of their lives.

Swami Viswananda, the leader of the coalminers, who on rising to second the resolution was given a tremendous ovation, said that it was indeed a sad spectacle that the coalminers of India although they produce the wealth which was represented by the total output of coal live in hovels and go without food and hardly any covering for their bodies while the proprietors of the mines live opulent lives, drive in motorcars, having the palatial buildings and roll in luxury. He knew how the miners for want of clothing were in the habit of gathering round a fire in their narrow huts with a single narrow entrance hardly enough for a man to pass, the inevitable result of which was death by suffocation.

Addressing the colliery proprietors both Indian and European he said that if the miners were without clothing—if they were without sufficient food and proper housing—it was to the detriment of the mineowners themselves. The world was changing and every capitalist and colliery proprietor, be he an Indian or a European, ought to know that these miners were not his slaves but they were his brothers. They were not to take mean advantage of their employees. They ought to treat them as their own children. In his opinion the employers of labour were labourers themselves. Therefore it was also necessary that they should understand the condition of labour. All labour should be treated with equity and equal fairness. There should be no

difference between white and black labour. In his opinion all those who live upon brain labour are equal to those who live upon manual labour.

According to the speaker the profit accruing must be so divided that a major portion of it might not go to the pockets of the shareholders or the employers allowing the labour to starve.

Continuing he reminded the mineowners that the spirit they were seeing today around them was not engendered by him but it had come from outside and if they were to stem the tide of this surging wave the only remedy lay in the Trade Union Congress, and if proper steps were not immediately taken Russian Bolshevism would enter India and would spread like anything. He warned the mineowners that if they allowed such things to drift as they were today a crash would come which would astonish the owners and the authorities. He himself would welcome the cooperation between the Trade Union Congress and the colliery proprietors in order to better the condition of the miners. He didn't want to see the day when labour demand that the houses of capitalists be looted or that they be forced to come to terms but rather it was his desire that the question of peace and bread be solved amicably.

Dwelling upon the numerous causes of unrest and bitterness existing amongst Indians against Europeans he said let no European or Anglo-Indian call "damn" or "swine" to any Indian labourer and if he said all these let him understand that he was calling these things to himself. What a contrast it was that while these mineowners live in magnificent buildings, the labourers huddle together in wretched hovels. He had taken Mr Pattinson to these hovels which he himself deplored.

Regarding the supply of wagons he said that he would challenge anyone to deny that while Europeans were given every facility of wagons and cheap rates the Indians were

denied any facility at all or were supplied with few wagons and at high rates.

Regarding the education of the children of these miners he said, that up till then the mineowners did not make any arrangement for them. He suggested that in every colliery there ought to be a school established for their education. But these schools, he said, ought not to be under the management of government. They should be under the management of a board composed of the representatives of the mineowners and Indian representatives of labour.

Coming to the question of the evil habit of drinking of the miners he said, the labour had taken to wine because they had no proper clothing to protect them from cold, they had no sufficient food to satisfy their hunger but, he said, the fault was of both Indian and European owners. The Indian mineowners were more to blame because these employees were their own brothers and their own countrymen. But to the Europeans he said, they must not shut their eyes and sit tight. He would not spare anybody, he was not partial either to the Englishmen...

The speaker continuing said, that he was glad to inform the audience that as a result of negotiation the proprietors represented by Mr Pattinson had agreed substantial increase in wages of the miners and the provision of better housing conditions, for education, etc. This was a welcome sign but they must understand that the workers were not the real slaves. The real slaves were the capitalists, who but for the workers would starve. The golden rule of life is that he who works shall eat. It is a rule which the capitalists must follow if they want peace in the coal fields. It was a shame that miners barely earn more than $7\frac{1}{2}$ annas a tub while the managers were given fat salaries and the absentee landlords earned huge dividends. "Look at that mass of humanity, with hardly enough clothes on them to cover their nakedness. Look at their pitiable half-starved condi-

tion. There is only one way to bring peace to the workers, i.e. to treat the workers as equal human beings." (*Loud and prolonged cheers.*)

Mr J. Pattinson, President, Indian Mining Association, who on rising was received with cheers addressing the assembly said :

"Mr Ramjash Agarwalla, Mr President and gentlemen,

"I wish to thank you most sincerely for giving me the opportunity of addressing a few words to the congress especially as I am a representative of the employers of colliery labour. I can assure that I very deeply appreciate the honour granted to me. At the outset I wish to state definitely that so far as the colliery owners are concerned we are entirely in sympathy with the labour and our one desire is to see that the labour is well treated, well housed and well looked after and further we most desire to see the standard of the colliery labour raised.

"We are prepared to grant the demands of the labour within reason, but on the other hand I think, we are justified in asking the labour to cooperate with us and give us more coal. By working six days a week the labour can earn more money and we can earn more money which will enable us to spend more money on the improvement of the labour conditions in the collieries.

"Some of the miners will doubtless say 'Why should we work six days in the week when we can earn what we want in three days?' The answer to this is simple. If you will work six days in the week, you will earn more money and therefore you will have money to spend on luxuries for yourself and your family. Why not try and save money so that you can buy luxuries for your wives and children. Buy them ornaments and the children toys to play with and books to read. Do not, I beseech you, spend your extra money in the grog shops. This will do no one any good and will spoil your health and make you weak, so that you can-

not work at all. At the present rate at which you are paid, that is, taking a good gallery, easy cutting coal, good ventilation and no water, you are being paid seven and a half anna per tub of 13 cwt and at this rate, if you put in a good day's work, you can easily earn from Rs 1-8 to 2 per day and if you work for six days in the week you should be able to draw at the end of the week about ten to twelve rupees. Now on to this I have a proposal to put before you and that is, if you will work six days a week for a whole month then at the end of the month the company will give you a present of say a blanket or a saree or any other thing which you may fancy.

“Further, I propose that collieries should start small schools where your children can learn to read and write and also learn sanitation, so that they can protect themselves against the epidemics which break out at times in the colliery districts.

“The Jharia Mines Board of Health is doing its best to raise the standard of your houses and to keep the collieries clean and in a sanitary condition and should any colliery proprietor not give you decent houses to live, then my advice to you is, leave that colliery and go to other colliery where they do give you good houses.

“The same remarks apply to wages, water supply and other conditions.

“To conclude my remarks to the colliery labour, let me tell them that the owners are their friends and we are out to help you all we can and all we ask is cooperation from you. Another word do not drink so much. I don't say give up drink entirely but drink in moderation always and you will find you will be much better men.

“Now a few words on the formation of a trades union for the coalfields, we are entirely in accord with this movement and are prepared to give the Organisation Committee every possible assistance we can in order to arrive at a sound

working basis which will be of great assistance both to the labour and the colliery owners.

“With such an organisation in being, disputes and grievances can very easily be settled and a great many cases of misunderstanding which have occurred in the past, will never again arise.

“Let us work together, capital and labour. Do not let us quarrel as quarrelling never does any one any good. I offer you the helping hand and if you will accept it I do not think you will regret it.

“Gentlemen, I wish you every success in your labours and if at any time I can be of any personal assistance to you, you have only to ask me and I will gladly do my best to help you.” (*loud cheers*)

Swami Viswananda in explaining Mr Pattinson’s speech in Hindi said that Mr Pattinson’s speech was a triumph for the congress. It was proof positive that the leaders of the congress were imbued with the sole desire to rescue workers from the conditions of slavery. He gladly accepted Mr Pattinson’s offer but he hoped that Mr Pattinson’s promise be not like the pledge of Lloyd George regarding khilafat, which was kept only by its breach (*laughter and cheers*).

After this a number of miners came to the platform and related their stories of hardship and low wages which moved the audience to their inmost depth.

The congress stood adjourned till next day.

THIRD DAY’S PROCEEDINGS

The Second All India Trade Union Congress sat for the third day at 1 P.M. The proceedings began with the singing of national songs. Several resolutions were passed most of which were moved from the chair. Practically very few speeches were made.

The first resolution moved by Mr Ramjash Agarwalla ran as follows:

“That this congress condemns the attitude taken by the Indian Mining Association, the Indian Mining Federation and the Chamber of Commerce and warns them that such attitude will only precipitate the bitterest of class wars between employers and the employees.”

The resolution having been duly seconded and supported by Mr Bhakat Ram, S. K. Bose and Dr Gannu Bhai was carried without dissent.

The second resolution regarding the condition of miners was moved by Swami Darsanananda.

Mr Miller in seconding the resolution said, referring to the five coalminers who were dismissed from their service for attending the congress, he said, it was up to them to stop this sort of high-handed procedure on the part of the employers who would dismiss their employees for the simple fault of joining in the deliberations of that nature (Trade Union Congress) which were for their interest. He warned the mine owners that if those five dismissed miners were not taken back there ought to be a sympathetic general strike. Continuing he said, their work was to see that Indian labour work with dignity and with respect. He reminded the employers that the Indian miners were the same as the miners elsewhere, and they should be treated as such (*cheers*).

Welcome Address

SPEECH OF SETH RAMJASH AGARWALLA
CHAIRMAN, RECEPTION COMMITTEE

Gentlemen,

I thank you heartily for giving me the proud privilege of welcoming the labour representatives from the various parts of India to this Trade Union Congress at Jharia. The first question that naturally troubles me is whether I am at all competent for this responsible work. I am not a labourer myself but am on the contrary an employer of labour. But my long association with colliery work at Jharia for the last twenty-two years of my life has furnished me unique ample opportunities to acquaint myself with all the ugly features of mine labour. In fact its unequal struggle for bare existence has been such an oppressive experience to me that I shall be false to myself if I do not offer to redeem at least a portion of the immense debt I owe to ill-used labour. Besides, I want to challenge the disastrous prejudice which has taken a firm hold of the modern democracies that the different interests in our society are separated by unbridgeable gulfs. Whatever might be its justification in other lands, in Bharatvarsha at any rate, where emperors spurned their thrones to study the best means of mitigating all varieties of human sufferings, we ought to lay the axe to the very root of this unsocial sentiment, and that not so much by precept as by example.

This is one of the larger considerations which have induced

me to take a hand in the organisation of this Trade Union Congress and accept the onerous duties of the Chairman of its Reception Committee. I know my imperfections and limitations for the task. But if a sincere desire to bring joy and comfort to lives so long darkened by the denial of the requisite conditions of existence is any qualification for seeking to be identified with the movements initiated to help labour up to its proper position in our social economy then I may not be deemed altogether unworthy of my present role. At any rate I claim to possess an informed conscience. The iniquitous distance between the opulence of the mineowners and the starvation wages grudgingly granted to flesh and blood which are verily coined into our money strikes me as something monstrous, as unspeakable treason to that law—unrealised identity between the different forms of life which it is the highest human aspiration to realise. As I have watched a labour couple, with the babies which should have been sporting in god's free air and light, buried in the dungeon of the coalmine for the whole of the day to earn what is barely enough to appease their physical hunger, I have felt myself a criminal badly needing the settling of my accounts with my own conscience for participation in an economy which produces big bank balance on one side and half a meal and stunted growth on the other. Such a state of things could not go on. The reaction was bound to come. And labour upheaval all over the world was the inevitable nemesis.

OUR DUTY AS HINDUS

If we were true Hindus, if the laws of Manu actually governed our life and conduct, then this labour problem which is the most fruitful source of unrest throughout the world could hardly have arisen amongst us. For the basic conception of our caste system is that our creator has delegated to us his own duty of protecting his creation.

Brahma when he created the vaishya made over to him the charge of the lower animals and when he created the brahmin and kshatriya entrusted them with the protection of humanity by sacrifice and righteous rule. So those whom we now use solely as materials for exploitation are in fact our charges to be cared for and looked after by us as the representatives of their maker. So what a change for the worse in our outlook. From protectors we have degenerated into the virtual destroyers of those placed in our safe custody by our god. We have been further enjoined to undergo a course of regular training to qualify ourselves for this duty of protection. It is a sin for us to shirk this duty. And where we ourselves are capable of doing this work, to get it done by others is a punishable offence. One of the chief items of our education according to Manu ought to be the study of the scale of wages according to which labour ought to be remunerated and of other conditions for its joy, comfort and freedom in life.

So the necessity that has been forced even on Indian labour to organise itself for self-protection argues a total oblivion of the ideal which our own religion set before us in this direction. Our Hindu society has evolved on the socialistic basis. According to Narad, one who earns more than what is required to buy the bare necessities of life is a thief. The different castes are only to discharge their respective duties to society uninfluenced by considerations of individual benefit not to speak of the sense of superiority or inferiority.

That people nurtured on such a tradition and culture should find it necessary to take the help of trade unions to secure to labour its due is an outrage on our very nature. But, invaded as our society is by ideas and ideals which militate against the continuance of healthy corporate life, we must use for the time being the makeshifts and stop-gaps, which have the merit of making for a little cosmos in the chaos of conflicting interests. Till the centre of gravity of our social system is once more shifted from egoism to altruism

the western nostrums have to be availed of in the interests of our multiplying labour population.

LABOUR & MAHATMAJI'S MOVEMENT

And labour need no longer grieve or complain and go on bended knees before power to meet its lowering brow. The high-placed and white-handed shall soon have to shake hands smelling of murk and pitch. They may now ply the pick-axe and shovel but ere long they promise to wield the sceptre. For, do we not all feel the call of the epoch? It is the epoch of the sudra. It has come to raise the sudra from the dust to the throne.

Strange that the world could so long ignore the real maker of its civilisation and progress. For who feeds the steam engine, the harbinger of science-made civilisation? Is it not my poor coal-cutting couple who deserve something better than a crust of bread or bed of straw? The farmer and the mechanic, the artisan and the unskilled worker—they divide between themselves the activities which keep the world going. But they are the lowest rung of the social ladder on which ambition plants its feet to leap to wealth and fame.

We wring the hand which feeds us, which clothes us, which moves us, which shelters us and we claim to be civilised. It is the cry of this working man that has rent the sky everywhere since the dawn of mechanical civilisation but the prevailing power kept on closing its ear against this cry till in the last great war it became clear how indispensable the workingman is when a nation has to live through a difficult moment of its history.

And what do we find here in India today? Who are responding to Mahatma Gandhi's call? Who were the first to discover and declare that in him god has at last raised us a friend, who if faithfully followed will take us on to the end of our troubles? It is the poor, unknown and unrecognised masses of India. They have shown their instinctive percep-

tion of greatness. They are standing by their idol through storm and stress, good report and evil, while educated and intelligent stammer and stare at him as at something alien and ununderstandable.

And if the bigger movement of Indian emancipation is to be made a success, the motive force as we have so often seen during the short space of its existence, must come from those so-called feet of clay to which the whole country has now learned to pin its faith. Today we are no longer leading labour but are being led by it. It is the first in the field every time, at every call. It is setting examples of courage, sacrifice and fearlessness to those who have so long striven to make them moral and physical wrecks. They are in the firing line while pride and grandeur have slunk into the deserter's ditch either for a ribbon to stick in their coat or for a handful of silver. No, the hour has struck when labour rightly demands our homage. So long cast as offal on the dung-hill, there it has managed to blossom in such beauty and splendour as to compel attention. This is the meaning of the present unique assemblage.

WHEREFORE LABOUR COMPLAINS?

People still ask: "Wherefore does labour complain?" It is to reply to the unimaginative, impertinent and brutal question that I have chosen to be your spokesman today. Myself one of your exploiters, I cannot err on the side of overdoing the replying. Neither is it necessary to survey the condition of labour from China to Peru to answer this question, nor is it necessary to enquire what is happening at Washington or Geneva to answer it. It is also not necessary to go into the history of all manner and description of labour movements to answer the question. Is it not common knowledge that labour complains because it sows for others to reap, because it starves while others fill themselves to surfeit, because it is huddled together in a pigsty while others roam

about amidst pleasures and palaces, because it limps in severe heat and cold to its work while others ride triumphantly to their magnificent palaces of business? We all know it, but where is that sympathetic pain which will plan some effective means of escape?

The story of the poor is going round almost from the days of Adam, but still it bears repetition. It looks as if nobody has heard it. And what do we see in our collieries? The sights and scenes we have around us, the facts and figures that form our direct knowledge, the accidents and incidents that occur off and on under our very nose—do they not crash even into our dull and sluggish consciousness a solemn and urgent message?

A coolie couple dives deep down into the bowels of the earth; there it inhales coal, dust and lamp-smoke, there it cuts the coal and fills the tub, there it runs the risk of being crushed down to death, there it swims in vapour and gas, there it shuts itself off from the sun and air, and only to earn from Rs 6 to Rs 9 a week. If either the husband or the wife falls ill the work stops, no wages are earned, no food is bought; and what then? If it is a family of six or seven and the breadwinner the self-same familiar couple, how are so many mouths to be fed?

If the woman bears a child and is near her time who comes to the rescue of the family? Imagine the mother going regularly to underground work every day even when she is big with child six or seven months. The state may kindly step in and stop her going to work. But that is easy philanthropy. Where is the money to come from to meet the daily expenditure, let alone the expenses of confinement?

Then when age and infirmity comes, where is the working couple to go? These are plain questions whose replies are long overdue. But none has yet been attempted. But how are we interested in the matter, we who only wring money from your misery and degradation from year's end to year's end? You are none of us. Our aim is only to overwork you,

to wither you, to wither your flesh and to weary your bones and to turn you on the street when you are past all use. You must think out your own problems.

This is why this Congress has been called. I can realise the condition of labour all over India. From what I see in the collieries at Jharia I can very well understand why the coolies of the Chargola valley left their cosy corners in the tea gardens and undertook to trudge thousands of miles on foot under the spell of Mahatma Gandhi's name.

There has been a family likeness in the treatment of labour all over the world. Will you hear how it has been treated in free England? Will you hear why those trade unions were borne. Will you hear how long they took to legalise themselves? Will you hear what it cost them to fight their way to their present position? Then permit me a small quotation.

REPRESSION OF LABOUR IN ENGLAND

“All through the 18th century the state legislated against workers' unions and in 1799 it finally prohibited all sorts of combinations, under the menace of severe punishments. In fact the British Parliament only followed in this case the example of the French Revolutionary Convention, which had issued a draconic law against coalitions of workers, coalitions between a number of citizens being considered as attempts against the sovereignty of the state which was supposed equally to protect all its subjects.

“The work of destruction of the mediaeval unions was thus completed. Both in the town and in the village the state reigned over loose aggregations of individuals, and was ready to prevent by the most stringent measures the reconstitution of any sort of separate unions among them. These were then the conditions under which the mutual-aid tendency had to make its way in this nineteenth century.

“Need it be said that no such measures could destroy that tendency? Throughout the eighteenth century, the workers'

unions were continually reconstituted. Nor were they stopped by the cruel prosecutions which took place under the laws of 1797 and 1799. Every flaw in supervision, every delay of the masters in denouncing the unions, was taken advantage of. Under the cover of friendly societies, burial clubs or secret brotherhoods, among the Sheffield cutlers and the miners, vigorous federal organisations were formed to support the branches during strikes and prosecutions.

“The repeal of the Combination Law in 1825 gave a new impulse to the movement. Unions and national federations were formed in all trades and when Robert Owen started his Grand National Consolidated Trades Union, it mustered half a million members in a few months. True, that this period of relative liberty did not last long. Persecution began anew in the thirties, and the well-known ferocious condemnations of 1832-44 followed. The Grand National Union was disbanded, and all over the country, both the private employers and the government in its own workshops began to compel the workers to resign all connections with unions, and to sign ‘the document’ to that effect.

“Unionists were prosecuted wholesale under the Master and Servant Act—workers were being summarily arrested and condemned upon by the master. Strikes were suppressed in an autocratic way, and the most astounding condemnations took place for merely having announced a strike or acted as a delegate in it—to say nothing of the military suppression of strike riots, nor of the condemnations which followed the frequent outbursts of acts of violence.

“To practise mutual support under such circumstances was anything but an easy task. And yet, notwithstanding all obstacles, of which our own generation can have hardly an idea, the revival of the unions began again in 1841, and the amalgamation of the workers has been steadily continued since. After a long fight, which lasted for over a hundred years, the right of combining together was conquered, and already in 1902 nearly one-fourth part of the

regularly employed workers, i.e. about 1,500,000 belonged to trade unions.”

THE REMEDY

This is how the right of mere association was earned. The outstanding lesson of this long-drawn persecution of labour for striving to secure the conditions of decent existence ought to set you to a supreme effort to realise the ideal of swaraj within the scheduled time; for your poverty is not the disease but a symptom. The disease is slavery. If you cannot achieve your freedom and get rid of the blighting influence of western capitalism the thorny path you will have to tread simply to acquire the right of association and assert your just claims (is) clear from the history of labour persecution given above.

We in India act up to the motto “Live and let live”. It has never occurred to our wealthy people here to withhold from labour the very conditions of life. Labour here was perfectly autonomous. The system of production never necessitated such an accumulation of money in a few hands. The charka, the loom was all within the means of the family and came down from generation to generation. So if we are to take advantage of our simple social system again, it must be rescued from its submerged condition and unless we can break the spell of western hypnotism by accomplishing our all-round emancipation, confidence in our lost institution will take long to return.

To that end therefore the real people of India must learn to unite and make their presence felt. In you lies our real strength. The peasantry and the artisans have again to be set upon their legs. They have lost the richness and joy of freedom of life by being required to concentrate within small industrial areas and condemned to a drab tragedy of existence. Draw yourselves up to your full stature. Call up the slumbering divinity in you. Realise the flooding in

of the personal soul and the nonviolent fight which Mahatmaji wants you to put up will be very easy of accomplishment.

Our avatars have sometimes sprung up from what they call the masses. Measure yourself up against the insuperable obstacle that may be opposed between you and your objective. Immense are your possibilities. Your philosophy says that you are no other than god himself. Only the timidity and servility bred by long political subjection has made lambs of the lions. Rise against tyranny of all manner and description. Do away with the curse of untouchability. Clasp your Mohamedan countrymen to your bosom. Let love and sympathy, nonviolence and charity permeate the whole atmosphere.

But all the same be manly and self-respecting. To submit to wrongs, to acquiesce in oppression, is to insult the divinity in you. Have you heard of the high stakes for which labour is playing in Europe? They want to reconstitute their society, to tear up the present economic system, to do away with private ownership of land and capital and transfer all properties from individual to communities.

Socialism is not a new thing in India. The emotion of social justice is the very life-breath of your social system. Here no class or caste is to play for its own hand. Service of the whole is the basic principle of your religion and morality. You are to realise your identity from life. With such an inspiration you are waging your present battle for freedom. If you can win this victory with nonviolent means, you are an example to the world at large as to how self can be realised without shedding a single drop of blood, without using an angry word or casting an offensive glance. Learn to suffer, suffer and suffer again.

STRIKES

In this connection I want to speak a few words about strikes. Strikes have now become a common feature of the labour movement in India. Last year there were altogether 183 strikes all over India, involving more than 3 lakhs of people. Only a small number of these strikes were completely or partially successful. The misery and inconvenience caused to the strikers, as also the general public is therefore out of all proportion to the results obtained.

Strikes of course have their use, in creating enthusiasm, promoting solidarity and stimulating self-devotion amongst the labour population. But strikes should never be entered into light-heartedly for minor ameliorations. Besides, when you have to reckon with a capitalistic government, you must first make sure of your capacity to offer sustained, organised and peaceful resistance before deciding on a strike.

The French syndicalists, who have lately done most to popularise the ideal of strike in Europe and have introduced some of its most violent features, mostly resort to strikes to change the entire social and economic structure of the country. They very seldom go on strikes for paltry gains. Besides it is not consistent with dictations of self-respect to strike in season and out of season for every temporary inconvenience and disability.

Evolution of true manliness should be the real objective of all our sectional and national activities. Our attitude towards strikes should be governed by that well known dictum of the poet about quarrels in general:

*Beware
Of entrance to a quarrel, but, being in,
Bear 't that the opposed may
beware of thee.*

CONCLUSION

Let this All-India Trade Union Congress at Jharia be an approximation to that united India which has come within the range of practical politics. I am proud that I have been privileged to accord a reception to such a gathering. It has a significance all its own this year, when a few days more and we shall have attained swaraj.

We are conscious of the imperfections of our arrangements for bringing together so many of you from all parts of India within this small industrial area. I hope you will forgive us our shortcomings and proceed to your deliberations with a joyous and enthusiastic heart. The evils of industrialism, I again beg to remind you, will not yield to any mechanical treatment. Those of the West who have given their thoughts to the subject are crying for a change of heart—are urging the creation of a moral and spiritual atmosphere. Disinterestedness in work is their last word on the subject. This is the message of the East and who will deliver it to the world if you still choose to grovel in the dust?

Presidential Address

Comrades,

I have to thank you very heartily for the honour you have done me by electing me President of this congress; but I deeply deplore the loss of Lala Lajpat Rai's leadership at this particular juncture. The loss is aggravated by the diffidence I feel in occupying the chair in succession to so illustrious and industrious a champion of labour as Lala Lajpat Rai. However, I have ventured to do so, confident that I can count upon your most cordial cooperation.

FIRST VICTORIES

You are all aware that Trade Union Congresses were unknown in India till last year. When the project was first conceived, failure was feared, but the moment its advent was announced, considerable interest was manifested, which grew in volume till it culminated in a session, absolutely unpredictable. The Presidential Procession with 10,000 followers, flags and mottoes was an exceedingly impressive demonstration and extorted the admiration not only of the people but even of the police by its unique combination of enthusiasm with discipline.

At the Empire Theatre, 800 trade union delegates from all parts of India representing 60 unions numbering 120,000 members gathered together to lay the foundations of the

labour movement and discuss pressing problems. The proceedings lasted for three days revealing much animation, intelligence and eloquence, both masculine and feminine. I believe that the Bombay Congress can challenge comparison with any similar congress in any part of the world in the first stage of the swaddling clothes. Its immediate achievements were a welcome declaration of government attitude towards trade unions by the governor of Bombay, and the acceptance by the government of India of the congress nominations for the Geneva Conference, thereby acknowledging that the Trade Union Congress is the most representative labour institution in India for the purpose of the labour organisation of the League of Nations.

Under these circumstances I thought that the Bombay Congress would remain unrivalled for many a year. But I am delighted to observe that coal has beaten cotton, and I hasten to congratulate the Reception Committee upon its splendid performance, and to express my appreciation of the magnificent response of the trade unions of India and the people of Jharia. I trust our next victory will be an adequate representation of India on the staff of the League of Nations in order to enable us to contribute our share in the solution of the great problem of "Pax et Panis".

TRADE CONVENTIONS

The world of labour is clamouring for peace and bread but is groaning under the load of loans and stones. Capital apprehending catastrophe is endeavouring to perpetuate the present balance of power without incurring further costs by restraining rivalry in dreadnoughts. But this does not go to the root of the evil. The root of the evil is insatiable and ignoble concupiscence of capitalists. Most millionaires love lucre more than wife or life. Their cupidity inflames trade jealousies—the prolific cause of war. Their cupidity is really responsible for the subjection of India, the British wars of conquest since the 18th century and even the last war.

The real remedy is to put a brake on this cupidity by fixing the maximum profit on capital by domestic legislation. They will then cease fleecing the producers and consumers by the trick of the lowest wages and the highest prices. This must be supplemented by placing international trade under international conventions, so as to ensure the proper distribution of foodstuffs, raw materials and manufactured articles according to the requirements of each state. This combination of domestic legislation and international conventions will facilitate the solution of the problems of unemployment, and the minimum wage sufficient in the words of Pope Leo XIII to maintain the worker "in reasonable and frugal comfort".

No doubt this demands some altruism. Labour alone is capable of it for labour readily responds to noble ideals founded on justice and fairplay. My hope is centred in the Labour Branch of the League of Nations. I believe that peace, goodwill and happiness on earth depend upon the international solidarity of labour comprising of all classes of workers by head or hand, on sea or land. It is for this reason that the labour of India must insist on its proper place on the League of Nations to play its part in promoting the solidarity of labour.

SWARAJ-CUM-SWADESHI

Descending from the international pedestal to the national plateau our first demand must be swaraj for India. The bureaucrats believe that there is nothing better on earth than British rule just as Scotch teetotallers think that there is nothing better in heaven than Scotch whisky. But without national government we cannot promote international solidarity. Without political power we cannot solve economic problems.

But swaraj will not suffice. We must also have swadeshi. It will be conceded that an intelligent, industrious and

civilised people ought to be politically and economically self-contained if no insurmountable obstacles are interposed by nature. But many of my friends imagine that they can have swadeshi before swaraj. This is putting the cart before the horse. We may have swaraj without swadeshi, but we can never have swadeshi without swaraj. We may have some sort of swadeshi by self-sacrifice and boycott but true swadeshi can only be reached by tariffs. Tariffs mean fiscal freedom. But fiscal freedom is utterly incompatible with foreign rule.

Therefore, we must first seek swaraj. Some say we shall get swaraj through swadeshi. They do not reckon with the political force, and economic factors arrayed against them under a foreign rule.

Millowners, merchants, importers, under their cloaks, cover a multitude of sins, that impede the progress of the charka and swadeshi. Therefore, comrades, our battle-cry must be swaraj-cum-swadeshi, till international trade is regulated by international conventions for the benefit of all nations.

MINISTRY OF LABOUR

Turning now from the form of government to the reform of the administration I would suggest the early establishment of a ministry of labour. The comparative indifference of government to the vital interests and problems of labour is intolerable considering that labour constitutes 90 per cent of the population and contributes over 80 per cent to the coffers of government. The labour problems demand an energetic policy and a generous budget even if half the army has to be disbanded. It is a gigantic problem but chiefly the creation of British rule and commerce. The fate of Indian villages and industries proves it.

SWEET AUBURNS

From time immemorial India has been divided into villages. There are now 750,000 villages. Already in the time of Manu these villages had developed into little republics so well organised that they could defend themselves even if the central power perished. For this reason kingdoms after kingdoms and dynasties after dynasties tumbled to pieces like the walls of Jericho but these republics smiled and stood firm as a rock. . . The cultivator was venerated. Neither warrior nor robber molested him. The village land was held in common, tilled in common, and the harvest divided according to the needs of each family. Priest, police, barber and blacksmith, each got his share for the services rendered. The village grant to the exchequer was settled by the headman and the ryots. Taxation was based upon the principle of the income-tax—the maximum levied was 10 per cent of the produce.

Under this system these Sweet Auburns cheered the labouring swain till they were destroyed by the British system of land revenue and rack rents. Under the Moguls the assessment in Bengal rose only by 4½ million rupees in 183 years (10½ to 14½) but under the John Bull's it rose by 12 million in 25 years (14½ to 26). In Bombay on the fall of the Peshwa it rose by 10 millions in 4 years (8½ to 18). This inflation was arrested in Bengal by the permanent settlement, but under the ryotwari settlement it grew like topsy rendering agriculture the refuge of the unemployed.

The result is that 155 million acres of arable areas are lying fallow out of 370 millions, exclusive of forests and deserts. Many million landlords have become landless as their holdings passed into the hands of creditors. Zamindari Bengal is free from famines since 1793, but ryotwari India is worse off than the jews in captivity. Recurring famines and heavy assessments have so impoverished the people and

impaired their physique that six millions were swept away by one short epidemic of influenza.

The government have done next to nothing to agriculturists though Germany and America furnish valuable measures. I believe the true solution lies in the restoration of the village republics. It accords with the socialistic genius of the people with their joint family system and Islamic brotherhood. It ensures the economic basis of socialism by the practical nationalisation of land, and furnishes 750,000 centres with democratic constitutions for constructing a real social democratic state.

INDUSTRIES

I will now turn to industries. India has long been famous as the emporium of the world. For centuries there was a constant outflow of goods and inflow of gold. Pliny, the Elder, lamented the drain of gold from Rome to India. But this process was reversed under British rule. One of the most flourishing of our national industries was weaving. Almost every woman did some spinning in spare time like Marguerite in *Faust*. England could not compete with India on equal terms on account of the excellence of the Indian workmanship in spite of the mule jenny and the first powerlooms. So she stooped to conquer. She prohibited certain imports, punished importers and/or weavers and closed the door against India by tariff bars while at the same time clamouring for an open door in India.

Were India free she would have retaliated but an obliging British government opened the gateway by abolishing the import duties.

In this dishonourable way the weaving industry was strangled—only those survived who produced finer fabrics which powerlooms could not produce. When improved inventions had assured England of industrial supremacy she embarked upon free trade to make India a British farm for

the supply of raw materials. But when new rivals arose free trade leaned towards fair trade and preferential treatment. In 1870 Germany had little foreign trade. Within 30 years she became a formidable rival. Japan has gone ahead by leaps and bounds under protection. But India has slept like Rip Van Winkle despite the thunders of war and its aftermath.

For a 100 years government have done nothing to develop Indian industries. On the contrary, under Manchester domination England has retarded the growth of the textile industry by countervailing duties. Such was the fiscal policy of England even towards a struggling nascent industry.

But unfortunately today our mill magnates are doubtful benefactors. Some facts are deplorable. I understand that 7½ million spinners and weavers produce 100 crore yards of cloth at present. The Indian consumption is 500 crore yards. This would give work for 37½ millions. Therefore the mills of Manchester and India have driven 30 millions to fresh fields or pastures new.

The mills of India employ 3 lakhs displacing 12 millions by producing 160 crore yards of cloth. If the well-to-do wear khaddar instead of fine fabrics, they will probably provide 5 million spinners and weavers their daily bread. Handlooms can never compete with the powerlooms. Little village mills on German models might bring salvation.

The consumers have fared little better than the weavers. Taking advantage of the war the millowners have indulged in unscrupulous profiteering. Prices were forced from 10 annas per lb in 1914 to 40 annas in 1918. In 1914 the profits were 89 lakhs against 1,652 lakhs in 1920 on a capital of 10 crores. The rise in the value of shares ranges from 500 to 3,000 per cent.

The producers' lot has been harder. In 1914 wages were thrice the profits. In 1920 wages were one-third the profits. From 1893 to 1914 by two or three strikes the operators

got an aggregate increase of 75 to 80 per cent. But the official index of prices show that the cost of living rose by 100 per cent from 1893 to 1914, and has since doubled.

The same tale of woe is told in every factory, workshop or railway in Bombay. Nowhere in the world are workers more at the mercy of the Dives than in India for want of trade unions. The resulting conditions are morally and materially shocking. Bombay, like Bolton of old, is full of the Bastilles of the poor—those dens of disease and death which made Sir Thomas Holland declare that he would rather see the mill industry of Bombay wiped out of existence.

Meanwhile government have done little. The fact is that Mr Montagu's antediluvian government have not realised the greater importance of the ministrant functions of government in modern civilisation. And yet nowhere in the world will government experience greater approbation than in India for measures that aim at the amelioration of society by socialistic legislation—our first step must be getting a good minister of labour. Then it will be the business of this congress to suggest measures.

This brings me to the Draft Constitution of the Congress which you will examine and adopt with or without modification.

CONSTITUTION

Our ambition ought to be to make the congress the national organ of labour, economically, industrially and politically, as represented by the cooperative, trade union, and socialistic movements. We shall then have within our fold producers and consumers, manual and mental workers. Our constitution must be wide enough to embrace all these activities.

Our industrial methods must include the triple methods of mutual insurance, collective bargaining and legal enact-

ment. Our political policy must steer clear of the extreme individualism and bolshevism and follow the golden mean of fabian socialism. Fabians are committed to the fourfold parts of progress consisting of collective ownership, and administration, collective taxation and collective provision, whether by voluntary cooperative method, or by compulsory municipal or state methods.

In order to apply ourselves to these varied activities we must have permanent habitation as a centre of gravitation and radiation. We must locate in it an office with the necessary departments, adequately staffed. All this is impossible without Lloyd George's "silver bullets". I wonder if the Indian National Congress and the provincial conference will give a helping hand. They might give us a tenth of the crore they have collected. Give me 10 lakhs and I will give you swaraj in 10 years. No one else can give it to you in less than 10 years—not even the Viceroy.

TRADE UNIONS AND POLITICS

We shall be told to eschew politics. I shall concede at once that trade unions should not dabble in politics individually. They might discuss the industrial aspects of politics and formulate their proposals for concerted action by the Trade Union Congress. But the Trade Union Congress cannot dispense with politics. Trade unionism is not the mere pursuit of £.s.d. but is a social philosophy whose dominant doctrine is that the welfare of society rests upon the welfare of the workers. Is a conflict between capital and labour not a political warfare for equality? Do not economic questions generate perplexing political problems?

There is really no distinct line of demarcation between economics and politics as a careful study of the proceedings of the Washington Labour Conference will disclose. The objection is only a faint echo of the terrific thunders once hurled against "politicals" in England. The bitter quarrels

between "politicals" and "industrials" ended only with the extension of the franchise by the Reform Act of 1885.

The fact is that at the bottom of the objection was the fear that the masses would wrench from the classes the political power by combination. This fear must be greater in India where the power is in the hands of foreigners. Besides, direct action even for political ends has been sanctioned by British labour. It stopped Churchill's machinations against Russia. The bureaucracy may, therefore, fear that a general strike may be the shortest way to swaraj but this is no reason for Trade Union Congress to boycott politics. We are quite justified in ignoring the objection.

OUTSIDERS

The next objection is against outsiders. It springs from fear of politicians or hatred of trade unions. It originated with the officials but comes with an ill-grace from employers. The employers' associations have outsiders as paid officials. Why should they object to unions having paid or honorary outsiders. Employers have no business to interfere with the internal affairs of the union. The objection can easily be circumvented. Outsiders need not figure before the footlights but can control behind the scenes. Is it better that they should control without responsibility? The fact is that in spite of labial confessions of faith the little Petits of India look upon trade unions as some power of darkness which cannot flourish without the help of outsiders on account of want of education of the insiders. And yet the outsiders constitute an impartial element in a dispute between employers and employees.

In England workers have a rooted objection to outsiders. The reason probably is that they have no faith in their sympathy, for disinterestedness makes them lukewarm. But after all in a trade dispute the outsider would represent the consumer and therefore the presence of the outsider should

be desirable. Instead of reviling at the outsiders the employers ought to recognise that the discontent is economic and cooperate with the outsiders who are helping the workers in their hour of need at considerable sacrifice to themselves.

MEASURES TO BE TAKEN

I will not detain you with a discussion of the measures for the welfare of workers that should be undertaken by government or unions. The important matters are unquestionably education, sanitation, workmen's compensation, nationalisation of land, railways and coal mines, jute and tea, and exportation of foodstuffs. A small export of foodstuffs means a large rise in prices.

I would lay down three rules for our guidance. Unions should not undertake any burden which can only be efficiently borne by the state. The protection to Trade Unions in India should be as extensive as in England. The Taff Vale Case and the Osborne judgment are standing warnings against any watering down as suggested in the government circular. The third rule is that we should insist upon giving full effect to the conventions and recommendations of the labour conferences under the League of Nations unless they are obviously objectionable. With these rules before us we shall seldom go wrong. It is always better to err on the side of humanitarianism.

ALI BROTHERS

There are two themes on which I wish to say a few words although they are not quite germane to our congress. The first is the prosecution of the Ali Brothers. I have little doubt that the trial is vitiated by want of proper sanction. I have no doubt they could be convicted on a charge of sedition for they proclaimed from the housetops their intention to bring the government into contempt. But prosecution for sedition was impracticable after the Viceroy's declaration

that he would not set the law in motion so long as they abstained from incitements to violence. As apostles of non-violence they studiously abstained from such incitements. It then became necessary to accuse them of seducing the soldiers from allegiance. This looks like a mere pretext for even the judge acquitted them on this charge.

But the very prosecution raises fundamental question of policy. There is no doubt whatever that the overwhelming majority of sunnis believe that it is haram for a Muslim to remain in the British army at the present moment. This brings the Muslim faith into conflict with the British law. But policy demands that no man should be prosecuted when the law of god comes in conflict with the law of man. This is the meaning of religious toleration. It has been won by rivers of blood. "There are two elements coexistent in the conduct of human affairs", wrote Lord Dufferin, "policy and administration."

Policy determines the general lines along which the destinies of their country should be led. This policy is embodied in the Queen's Proclamation. But that proclamation is flung into fire on the very eve of the prince's visit. It is a big blunder and its effect is bound to be calamitous. No cabinet could survive such a blunder in England for 24 hours. Queen Victoria would certainly have asked Lloyd George: Quo vadis? — Whither you are going? Government is going to the dogs unless this big blunder is rectified in time by the release of the religious prisoners and recall of the governor. The governor of Bombay is fast developing into a second Sydenham. The governor imagines that George Lloyd is Lloyd George.

PRINCE AND SWARAJ

My next point is the prince's visit. The moment is inopportune. Every official knows it. When his coming was announced by Lord Reading, I felt he was to be the

messenger of swaraj. He may still be the harbinger of swaraj. When he returns home he may plead for swaraj as his father pleaded for sympathy. If he thereby helps Gandhi to get swaraj by the Sermon on the Mount, christianity would have achieved its greatest triumph on earth, and the prince would be the prince of peace and good will on earth. If he assures his people that India is loyal he will unwittingly deceive his people. But a terrible responsibility rests on those who would make him the instrument of deception by artificial reception.

The fact is that the workers of the world have learnt the lesson of war that no nation should govern another nation without its consent, and British imperialists and capitalists know that they can no longer keep India in bondage without deceiving the workers and chancelleries of the world that India consents. But India is bent on swaraj. Dadabhai, Tilak, Gandhi, the English literature and Wilsonian points have done their work. England can now keep India in subjection only by the power of pompoms and the methods of Ivan the Terrible.

It is unwise to rely too much on armies and navies. The Hohenzollern and Romanoff citadels fell before a shot was fired. England must now choose between Gandhi and Ivan the Terrible. But Ivan the Terrible is no model for the English nation.

“We shall never consent” says Macaulay, “. . . to paralyse a great people whom god has committed to our charge for the wretched purpose of rendering them more amenable to our rule. . . We are free, we are civilised to little purpose, if we grudge to any portion of the human race an equal measure of freedom and civilisation. . . I have no fears. The path of duty is plain before us, and it is also the path of wisdom, of national prosperity, of national honour. The destinies of our Indian empire are covered with thick darkness. . . It may be that the public mind of India will expand under our system till it has outgrown that system. . . and

demand European institutions. Whether such a day will ever come I know not. . . But whenever it comes it will be the proudest day in English history."

And when they are conceded it will be the proudest and brightest day in christendom. In this conflict between Christ and Caesar which Gandhi has inaugurated the prince has a grand opportunity of immortalising himself by proclaiming *orbi et urbi*, that the right remedy for India is swaraj, the whole swaraj and nothing but swaraj, so help him god.

Statements of AITUC Publicity Bureau

STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING

A meeting of the Standing Committee of the All-India Trade Union Congress was held at the head office, 20 Tamarind Lane, Fort Bombay on 15 June. Mr Joseph Baptista, Vice-President, Trade Union Congress, presided. The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved.

Mr D. Chaman Lall was appointed General Secretary, Trade Union Congress, in the place of Mr V. M. Pawar. The following Assistant Secretaries were appointed: Messrs M. D. Dalvi, G. K. Gadgil, Anantram.

The Secretary's report was read and a committee was appointed to examine the report and present it at the next meeting of the Standing Committee.

In the absence of the Treasurer, Mr L. R. Tairsee, the General Secretary read his report which was also referred to a subcommittee. On a motion by Mr Chaman Lall it was decided that this report should be completed and audited at the earliest possible date. It was decided that this should be done within a fortnight.

In view of the need for funds with which to carry on the work of the Trade Union Congress it was decided that a one-anna levy should be levied from all the affiliated unions.

In view of the need for absolute loyalty to the Trade Union Congress and its organisations the General Secretary appealed to all members of the Standing Committee to stand by the nomination to any office or to any council made by the Trade Union Congress and not allow the authorities to nominate at will representatives of Indian labour without reference to the Trade Union Congress.

The following resolution was carried unanimously :

“That this meeting of the Standing Committee welcomes the movement organised by the officials of the Trade Union Congress Executive for the formation of a Central Federation of Bombay Labour and appoints a committee under the draft rules for the purpose of drawing up a constitution for the federation in consultation with the committee already formed for the purpose of establishing a Central Federation of Bombay Workers.”

It was resolved that a subcommittee should be constituted to draft a Trade Union Bill.

It was resolved to refer the question of affiliation to the International Federation of Trade Unions to the above committee.

Discussion of the draft constitution was deferred to the next meeting.

The next meeting of the Standing Committee will be held on 6 July 1921, at Bombay.

D. CHAMAN LALL,
General Secretary,
All-India Trade Union Congress

(3 July 1921)

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

A meeting of the All-India Trade Union Congress Executive Committee was held at the Servants of India Society's Hall, Bombay, on 30 July. Lala Lajpat Rai presiding. Among the important matters transacted were the

following: (1) The report of the Accounts Subcommittee was submitted and passed, and it was decided to print and circulate the statement of accounts of the Trade Union Congress forthwith. (2) Lala Lajpat Rai, who had been chosen at the last congress, as the representative of the organised workers of India to the International Labour Conference informed the committee that as he was unable to proceed to Geneva, he would tender his resignation. Thereupon, Mr N. M. Joshi was nominated as a workers' representative to the Geneva International Labour Conference. The advisers chosen remain as at first decided: Messrs Chaman Lall and B. P. Wadia. (3) Messrs B. G. Horniman and Shapurji Saklatvala were appointed as the sole accredited fraternal delegates to the British Trades Union Congress to be held in September 1921. (4) The constitution which is to guide the next congress was discussed, amended and passed. (5) It was decided that the Second Trade Union Congress should be held at Jharia, the Bihar Coalfield Centre, in the month of November. (6) Mr J. Baptista, Vice-President of the Trade Union Congress, was chosen the President of the next session to be held in November.

(4 September 1921)

THE TRADE UNION CONGRESS

Mr Chaman Lall wires from Jharia, under date December 5:

Mischievous statements have appeared in certain Anglo-Indian papers and notably in the *Statesman* and *Commerce*, with a view to create a dangerous apprehension in the minds of the public in connection with the holding of the All-India Trade Union Congress at Jharia. It has been alleged that wholesale violence was to be expected and rumours have been spread to the effect that the military had been called in to quell certain violence, that agitators

of a violent type were inflaming the minds of the miners, that adequate provision should be made for the safety of all women and children, etc. All these were careful insinuations framed for the purpose of poisoning the public mind and for creating an unfavourable atmosphere for the holding of the congress. I take this opportunity to informing the public that not a single untoward incident has occurred in or around Jharia for which either the congress or any miner is to blame.

The volunteers kept wonderful order under Daulat Ram's direction during all the days that the congress, attended by thousands of miners, was in session. Both colliery managers and colliery owners stood aghast at this perfect example of discipline and forbearance. Their demand for military and machineguns and their panicstricken resolution demanding the application of section 144 and the total prohibition of the congress meeting within 200 miles of Jharia have now fallen rather flat and must appear blatant and ridiculous. The miners have kept the peace, but I find now that some of the owners are bent upon mischief. Cases have already come to our notice where several miners have been severely wounded by the hired assassins of some of the so-called protectors of the poor. A few miners were dismissed and others charged for unlawful assembly merely because, being threatened with a lockout for attending the congress sessions, they gave notice and demanded their back pay. The arrest of these men nearly caused a general strike and some of us immediately proceeding to the spot and interviewed the deputy commissioner in order to check the propensity of certain managers and owners to seek trouble. The men declared a strike and refused to return unless the arrested men were released. Miners from other collieries soon began to assemble. A rumour spread that one miner had received a gun-shot wound with the result that Jharia was full all day of agitated miners who were tactfully dispersed by the leaders. In the end one of the

owners of the colliery, where the trouble arose brought the men out on bail and today they were discharged.

Thus a general strike, threatened as a result of the employer's highhanded, hasty and uncalled for action, was averted through the activity of the men's leaders. I wish to direct the attention of all concerned that any high-handed action against the miners will no longer be tolerated. Their lives are miserable enough without the military and the police being sent for to add additional flavour to their sorrows.

We want peace in the coalfields. Peace will come if those, who have not already followed the Mining Association and the Mining Federation representation of the owners in expressing their willingness to treat miners as human beings, will learn to do so now. Remember that every ton of coal is smeared with human blood. A great responsibility rests with journalists and officials who set out to arouse civil passions and it is a crime to utter a single irresponsible word where the miner is concerned. I request all those who carry with them any sense of responsibility to help us in arriving at an amicable settlement and help us to keep the peace.

PRESENTATION OF GOLD MEDALS

Every visitor and delegate to the second session of All-India Trade Union Congress, Jharia, was impressed by the arrangement, the decoration of the huge pandal in which the great gathering was held, the army of volunteers that preserved order and the conveniences left nothing to be desired. The chairman of the Reception Committee, the genial and kind hearted Ramjash Agarwalla and Vice-President Seth Hardeodas Agarwalla presented gold medals two each to Chotalal Jain, Jagannath Gupta, secretary Reception Committee, Lala Daulat Ram, C-in-C of Tilak Sevasamiti, and Gopal Krishna Gadgil, Assistant

Secretary, All-India Trade Union Congress, and people of Jharia believe that the donors have only given expression to the feeling of gratitude for their splended and untiring services in the cause of trade unionism.

(11 December 1921)

Bombay to Jharia in Indian Press

A Bulletin issued by the All-India Trade Union Congress Publicity Bureau says:

The second session of the All-India Trade Union Congress meets in Jharia (Bengal Coal Mines) towards the end of November.

The exact date will be announced later on. Swami Viswananda is forming a Reception Committee and communications should be addressed to him at Jharia in connection with the arrangements which are being made for the holding of the next congress.

Meanwhile every union, kisan sabha or any other workers' organisation should immediately send:

Firstly, the resolutions showing that the union wishes to affiliate with the congress. Secondly, the names of delegates, together with a statement showing the total number of members of each affiliating organisation. Thirdly, any resolution which these organisations wish to place before the congress. Fourthly, the affiliation fee of one anna per member according to the total strength of the affiliating union.

The above information must be forwarded immediately to the General Secretary, TUC, Bombay.

Mr Chaman Lall is shortly proceeding to Jharia and will visit a number of places en route.

(Bombay Chronicle: 4 October 1921)

The Secretary, AITUC, Jharia, wires under date 20 :

The All-India Trade Union Congress, second session will be held in Jharia (coalfields) on the 19th, 20th and 21st of November. The Reception Committee meetings are held every now and then and all the important work regarding the pandal and other necessities are vigorously carried on. About Rs 6,000 was sanctioned for the pandal. Delegates from all the trade, labour, and railway unions, kisan associations and visitors are invited. Delegates and visitors should please communicate their arrival at Jharia to the Secretary for making arrangements.

Lala Lajpat Rai resigns from office of President AITUC as being so far away from the office at Bombay, he feels he cannot cooperate with the other office-bearers who have to do without consulting him.

(Bombay Chronicle : 25 October 1921)

The following bulletin has been issued by the Trade Union Congress :

The pandal for the Jharia Congress has been erected and has accommodation for about ten thousand. The secretary of the Reception Committee wires that there is a great rush for reception committee membership although the fee for the same is fixed at Rs 25. Visitors' tickets are of four classes, viz (1) Rs 250, (2) Rs 100, (3) Rs 25 and (4) Rs 5. Workers who come as visitors and not as delegates will be charged only 4 annas and delegates one rupee each.

Labour organisations are again reminded that there are no restrictions upon their joining the congress excepting payment of one anna per member as affiliation fee. Any number of delegates can be sent to the Jharia congress provided the total number does not show more than one delegate for every hundred members of the labour organisations

sending delegates. All delegates and visitors are requested to take warm clothing. All labour organisations which have not so far joined are requested to elect delegates without delay and communicate their names either to the General Secretary, Trade Union Congress, Bombay, or the secretary, Reception Committee, Jharia. The leaders are expected at Jharia including Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Motilal Nehru, Lala Lajpat Rai and Mr C. R. Das. Swami Viswananda has proceeded to Delhi to offer personal invitations. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, leader of the kisans, is expected to join the congress deliberations. Workers of India, the Trade Union Congress provides you with the only representative national platform for the formulation of your demands. Few workers in the world are as powerless as you; few are worse exploited than you. Join the Jharia congress and then take effective measures to shake the chains of semislavery from your feet.

(Bombay Chronicle: 9 November 1921)

The secretary of the Reception Committee wires from Jharia under date November 14:

As advertised the congress meets on the 30th instant up to the 2nd prox. Arrangements are under vigorous progress, messages of sympathy are pouring in from abroad, and they are often published in the form of bulletins issued from the head office of the congress.

A strong financial committee, consisting of the following gentlemen, has been formed and they will approach the gentry and deserving persons of the locality. The committee crave their help and support to the financial committee.

The financial committee members are: Messrs H. D. Agarwalla, Damodar K. Trivedi (in-charge), Chhaganlal K. Parekh, Mohindra Chandra Kanauji, Haji Mohamed Mallik, P. Vinayak Ram.

Editors of newspapers, desirous of sending their representatives will please intimate to the office, and apply for complimentary passes, on or before the 22nd instant, so as to avoid disappointment. Great rush is expected and it is feared, as the number of the Reception Committee members and distinguished visitors, is limited, persons should have their names registered and necessary fees paid to avoid disappointment.

Persons desirous of keeping stalls around the pandal should apply for the same with the prescribed fees before the 20th instant only. Ground (15 x 12) will be let out for Rs 20 only for the session. Decision of the committee will be final.

The delegate fee is Rs 2 and not Rs 1 as wrongly reported.

(Bombay Chronicle: 17 November 1921)

The following Bulletin is issued by the Trade Union Congress:

The General Secretary has heard with consternation that the Jamshedpur manager of the Tata Iron and Steel Co, has refused permission to the delegates of the Jamshedpur Labour Association to proceed to Jharia to attend the Trade Union Congress. This highhanded action is looked upon as likely to create a great deal of friction. The following wire has been sent to Sir Dorab Tata:

"Have heard with deep regret manager Jamshedpur refused permission delegates workers attend Jharia Trade Union Congress. Kindly order at once granting permission."

Information has been received from England that Mr Montagu was interviewed by our representatives regarding the protection and registration of trade union with satisfactory results although Mr Montagu said that he was not then in possession of the circular issued on the subject.

(Bombay Chronicle: 22 November 1921)

Agenda for the session: Congress delegates assembly; President, Reception Committee reads address in morning; President-elect, Mr Baptista's address; Election of new Executive Committee; Provincial Reports; General Staff which will be working with Executive Committee.

Resolutions (proposed) are far-reaching and affect all classes of workers. Machinery will be devised for effective carrying out of resolutions passed by congress. Other resolutions of international and political importance will also be proposed. Workers from all parts of India have intimated their intention to attend. Labour Board, Madras—representing Madras labour all class; Labour Federation, Bombay—representing nearby unions will be as strongly represented as Bengal, Punjab, the United Province labour.

Representatives of the Assam workers and of other provinces will also be attending.

(*Bombay Chronicle*: 25 November 1921)

The Secretary of the Trade Union Congress wires from Jharia under date November 29th as follows:

Mr Baptista and Bombay delegates to the Jharia Trade Union Congress reached the coalfields shows that the colliery proprietors have taken alarm at the holding of the second session. It is reported that urgent important meetings have been held to discuss what steps should be taken to forestall the menace of a workers' congress held in the heart of the coal centre. Threats of a general strike are dangled before the owners in order not only to frighten them, but to direct the attention of the authorities to an alleged serious situation. Finally, it has been rumoured that strong military forces are likely to be requisitioned in case of trouble. I take this opportunity to contradict these mischievous stories of impending trouble in the coalfields,

and to warn the public of the dangers of the presence, if the rumour is true, of strong military forces at Jharia, requisitioned at the request of the English colliery owners. We have had a bitter taste of militarism in Chandpur and Chittagong, when the military are convened to help the employer against the worker. The authorities and owners must not lose their heads and the public must remain alert to the possibilities of the situation.

(*Bombay Chronicle*: 30 November 1921)

Considerable apprehension is being felt in coal mining circles in the Jharia districts as a result of the holding of the All-India Trade Union Congress at Jharia. The men have left their work, and it is not expected that there will be any coal-raising for at least three days and most probably not for a week.

A satisfactory feature of the situation is the fact that men necessary for keeping mines in working order—pumpmen, etc. have been allowed to continue at duty, so far, without molestation.

In response to representation made by the Indian Mining Association and the Indian Mining Federation the government has taken steps to protect life and property. So far no violence has been manifested.

It will be recalled that the All-India Trade Union Congress held its first annual meeting at Bombay last year.

(*Statesman*, 1 December 1921)

Mr Baptista, President, Mr Chaman Lall, Secretary, and Mr Dalvi, Assistant Secretary, of the Trade Union Congress, with many other Bombay, Madras, Jamshedpur and Calcutta delegates of the Trade Union Congress arrived here today, and on arrival were met by Seth Ramjas Agar-

walla, President of the Reception Committee, Swami Viswananda and other local leaders at Dhanbad. Several hundred people escorted the leaders to the special train, amidst cheering. The route to Jharia was lined with enthusiastic miners. A procession was formed at Jharia and cheering crowds escorted the President to his bungalow. The pandal erected by the Reception Committee can hold ten thousand people but twice that number is expected to attend the congress. The Coal Owners' Federation and Association has held several meetings to discuss steps to be taken in view of the serious situation created by the feelings generated by holding the Trade Union Congress at Jharia. It is understood all steps have been taken to preserve order. A huge procession estimated at several thousands with bands, escorted in the afternoon the President and party through gaily decorated streets. Balconies were also crowded with people shouting "Hindu-Mussulman ki jai". Volunteers preserved order and drew a cordon through the streets.

(*Bombay Chronicle*: 1 December 1921)

The second session of the All-India Trade Union Congress opened today amidst great enthusiasm. The coal-miners came to attend from distant places as work in many of the mines was closed in view of the meeting of the congress. Outside the pandal thousands of miners were seen assembled eager to obtain tickets, and many had to return owing to limited accommodation. At 1 o'clock Mr Joseph Baptista, President, accompanied by the chairman of the Reception Committee and many labour leaders entered the pandal amidst loud cheering. The pandal was full to its utmost capacity. Chairs were provided only for European visitors. The rest of the gathering numbering over fifteen thousand were seated on the floor. A feature of the gathering was the presence of a large number of women

workers. The great majority of people present wore khadi and Gandhi cap. Even the President was seated on the floor on the dais.

Mr Ramjas Agarwalla, chairman, Reception Committee, delivered his address in Hindi. The chairman who is a prominent colliery owner said he would be false to himself if he did not offer to redeem at least a portion of the immense debt he owed to the ill-used labour (*cheers*). He admitted the great distance of opulence of the mineowners and starvation wages grudgingly granted to the flesh and blood which was verily coined into money. As the chairman's voice did not carry very far, Swami Darsanananda in a powerful voice explained briefly certain portions of the chairman's address. The chairman then formally proposed Mr Joseph Baptista as the President of the All-India Trade Union Congress.

Mr Shyamsunder Chakravarty seconded the resolution in a speech in Hindi. He told the audience that Mr Baptista was the chela of Lokamanya Tilak and as such was a brave fighter against injustice and an upholder of the rights of the working classes. There was no man better than him to occupy the chair of the President of the Labour Congress.

Mr Deep Narayan Singh of Bhagalpur in supporting said that if subjection was a great evil in this world, then subjection of one country by another was as great an evil as subjection of one class by another.

Mr Baptista had really understood the heart of the political problem of these times. He had fought against class supremacy which involved the subjection of the workers. They who were the producers of the world's wealth were today no better than slaves. They must no longer remain content with their present position and through the Trade Union Congress they would attain their freedom.

Mr Baptista was then garlanded amidst enthusiastic cheers. He was in Gandhi cap and khadi dress. He read his

speech in English which was afterwards translated into Bengali and Hindi. The latter was circulated among the audience. The speech was received with great enthusiasm, the delegates cheered for several minutes every time swaraj, Mahatma Gandhi or the Ali Brothers were mentioned. The proceedings of the day terminated at about 5 P.M. amidst "Gandhi Maharaj ki jai!" and "Kaka Baptista ki jai!"

Police arrangements were of a careful nature and there were rumours of impending violence. It is stated that the colliery proprietors had demanded suppression of the congress and the application of section 144 CrPC. The Bihar government however did not feel inclined to take any such action. The congress meets tomorrow to discuss important resolutions.

(*Bombay Chronicle*: 2 December 1921)

The second day's proceedings of the Trade Union Congress opened today when the huge pandal was again full. The collieries are not working today. Mr D. Chaman Lall opened the proceedings by reading messages received from the workers in Europe and from Indian leaders. The Miners' Federation of Great Britain has sent congratulations hoping the congress would lead to the emancipation of Indian workers. The General Council of British Trades Union Congress, the Trades Union Congress of Scotland and numerous British unions, the Workers' League for India, the Red Trade Union International of Great Britain and other bodies have sent messages of sympathy. Pandit Motilal Nehru, Mr Jawaharlal Nehru, Mr C. R. Das, Mr Rajendra Prasad and others sent telegrams regretting inability to attend the congress.

Mr Chaman Lall then proposed the first resolution "That this Trade Union Congress declares that the time has now arrived for the attainment of swarajya by the people of

India." In doing so he said there were some people in this country who still believed there was immediate need for swarajya for the people of India. Such people were trying to delude themselves, there were others who say the workers of this country ought to have no connection with the movement for swarajya. The workers of this country were the prop of the nation, they made the nation, every such movement affected them more than it affected any other class. They could not afford to let the movement for national freedom alone. The only obstructors in the path of national freedom were those Indian capitalists, who join the foreign capitalists in order to exploit the workers. But the workers were eager for swarajya. He asked those thousands assembled there whether they wanted Mahatma Gandhi's swarajya (*loud shouts of "Yes, Mahatma Gandhi ki jai!"*). Workers of India wanted freedom, because freedom was breath of citizens' life. They asked for real swarajya for the workers of India in order that they should become not only the producers of wealth but also its rightful owners.

Mr E. L. Iyer, Madras, followed, saying it was the inherent right of workers to demand swarajya. Ill-treatment of Indian workers, such as in Madras, during the last mill strikes, he said, was possible only under government not amenable to the force of public opinion. They wanted real swarajya of workers, not of the capitalists.

Mr J. B. Miller, Punjab, who followed, said it was the right of every Indian to demand swarajya. An Indian was not worth his name who did not struggle for swarajya. Mr Jagatnarayan Lal of Patna further supported. Mr K. C. Chowdhury said, although a member of the Bengal Council, he stood for swarajya for India as the only way to abolish the iniquitous laws of this country. Mr Krishna-prakash Sen Sinha, Bihar, who delivered a powerful speech on swarajya saying swarajya was India's birth right but

there was no possibility of swarajya without support of workers of India.

The resolution was then put to vote and carried unanimously amidst acclamation.

* * *

In the course of a letter to the Chairman of the Second Session, All-India Trade Union Congress, Jharia, Bengal, Messrs Tom Mann and N. Watkins, of the British Bureau of the Red Trade Union International, London says:

“In your great gathering in the dark and dusty coalfields of Bengal, where your fine human beings are ground down to dull slavery by the ambitions of capitalist exploiters of our country, we send you today hearty greetings. As the British Bureau of the Red Trade Union International, we convey to you, not only our British greetings, but even the greetings of the workers of other lands that are all now united in this great movement. Comrades, in wishing you success, we know that we are wishing success and freedom to us all. A short-sighted labour movement of the past did not realise this great factor, and permitted the slavery of western capitalism to be enforced upon the innocent, helpless human beings of the East and we have now all seen the result.

“Comrades, reflect for a while upon the world as it now lies shattered, divided, oppressed and looted. The thoughtless western workers, united together in that ignominious Amsterdam International, have themselves brought this ruin upon the world. They were played off as the very tools and instruments of their capitalist bosses, and murdered one another, and robbed and looted one another. The soldiers of Britain and of Europe that march into the peaceful countries of the Far East to enslave mankind and to rob the natural wealth of foreign soils, are all members of the proletariat and of the working classes that are members of the Amsterdam International. They talk of their freedom

from oppression, of their own masters, and thus they remain as imperialist and sectional as their own capitalist masters.

“It is no use offering further comment upon the follies and vices of the old world. Let us all put our shoulders together and work for a different new world in which there is no imperialist race and no conquered races. The earth belongs to workers.

“We wish you every success in organising the 18,000,000 of your great and cultured population, who today are living by industrial work and handicrafts. We invite you to join the great new world movement of international solidarity on absolutely equal terms. Nay, we go further and we ask you to join us as much for our benefit as for your own, for we realise that so long as you are slaves and you are not free we cannot be free in the west. We trust that one of the first acts of your new committee will be to enter into communication with our British Council of this new International. We also hope that your committee will instruct your agents in London, namely, the Workers' Welfare League for India, to enter into communication with us on your behalf. We have watched from a distance the comic methods of the British Trades Union Committee, members of which are as imperialist in their outlook as their own masters, and we have seen how, in order to please the India Office bureaucrats, they have for the last two years, defied your wishes and prevented your trusted comrades, like Mr Horniman and Mr Saklatvala, from attending their congress, and stating the true facts of your case. We would welcome any comrades that you may appoint to attend our periodical conferences in Great Britain and we also trust that within a very short time, we shall be able to see, alongside our British section, our friends, comrades and brothers from India coming over to take part in the congresses of the Red Trade Union International.

“With many hearty wishes for your success, and with every promise of our support and cooperation and hearty good will.”

(*Bombay Chronicle*: 3 December 1921)

The second resolution on swadeshi was moved by Savitri Devi. She said India would win swaraj through the charka. You must learn to help yourselves. We Indians have no arms nor do we require any. The charka is our only weapon.

Baba Khalil Das seconding said, by serving India you serve humanity. Learn to spin and weave as it is the best way to serve India. The resolution was further supported by Mr Murarilal of Cawnpore and the delegates from Chittagong, Gaya, and other places and was carried unanimously. Even Europeans attending raised their hands. The audience at this stage numbered 60,000 and nearly 30,000 people collected in the main street outside the pandal and made a rush but volunteers kept order and accidents were prevented.

The swadeshi resolution reads as follows: “That this Trade Union Congress recommends the workers of India to adopt swadeshi and encourage the hand spinning and hand weaving.”

The third resolution for which everyone was on tip toe expectation related to the condition of miners. It reads: “That this congress deplores the miserable condition of life and employment of the coal miners of Bengal and Bihar which cry aloud for immediate remedy by way of reduction in the number of hours of work, increase in the rate of wages, provision for primary education, improvement in housing, compensation for injury, and prohibition of sale of liquor and authorises the executive committee to confer with the colliery owners and managers in order to adopt immediate and effective measures towards this end.”

Swami Darsanananda of Raneegunj Coalfield moving the resolution said he was a moderate and would ask the mine-owners to cooperate with the workers in improving the conditions, by making provision for provident fund and prohibition of sale of liquor, etc. and asked the miners to work for swaraj by being prepared to suffer even at the risk of their life. Swami Darsanananda dwelt on the miserable condition of the coalminers and declared that only a drastic remedy could bring peace and prosperity to them. He warned the colliery proprietors against the policy of drift and said a crash would certainly come which would astonish them. He also warned the government if they allowed this policy of drift to continue it would open the gate of bolshevism in India. He would welcome cooperation between the Trade Union Congress and the colliery proprietors in order to improve the condition of miners. He was glad to inform the audience that as a result of negotiation the colliery proprietors represented by Mr Pattinson had agreed to substantially increase the wages of the miners and to provide for better housing and education, etc. These he said were welcome signs but the capital must understand that workers were not the real slaves, the real slaves were the capitalists who but for workers would have to starve. The golden rule of life was that he who works shall eat. This rule the capitalists must follow if they wanted peace in the coalfields.

Mr Pattinson of the Indian Mining Association then asked for permission to address the congress. He said colliery owners were entirely in sympathy with the labour. They wanted to see labourers well housed, well looked after and standard of colliery labour raised. We are prepared, he said, to grant the labourers' demand within reasonable limit but we ask the labour cooperation to give us more coal. The miners by working six days in a week could earn more money and they (proprietors) could also earn more money. They could earn more money to enable

them to spend more on improving the condition of the labour. Do not I beseech you to spend your extra money in the grog shop, so I propose collieries should start small schools where children could learn to read and write and sanitation, so that they could protect themselves against epidemics which break out at times in colliery districts. But if proprietors do not give you decent houses my advice to you is leave collieries and go to other collieries where you get good houses. The same remarks apply to wages, water supply and general conditions. We assure you, owners' are our friends. We are out to help you. All we ask is cooperation from you. We are entirely in accord with the movement to form trade unions and I am prepared to give every working basis which would be great assistance both to the labour and owners. With such an organisation in being, disputes and grievances can very easily be settled and great many cases of misunderstanding which occurred in the past would never arise again. Let us work together capital and labour. I offer you helping hand if you will accept. I do not think you will regret it.

Swami Viswananda declared that Mr Pattinson's speech was a triumph of the congress. He gladly accepted his offer and said a conference would soon be called but hoped the owners would keep their promise.

* * *

After this a number of miners came to the platform and related the stories of their hardships and low wages. At the request of Savitri Devi many of the workers discarded foreign clothes. Election of the Executive Committee took place this morning and included: Messrs Mitter, Viswananda, Das, Moreno, Iyer, I. B. Sen, N. M. Joshi and others.

(*Bombay Chronicle*: 5 December 1921)

This morning (3 December) several Indian mineowners waited in deputation upon Mr Baptista. The congress regretted the resolutions of the Indian Mining Federation requesting government to stop the session of the congress and apply section 144. The wire was sent from Calcutta.

The third days proceedings of the Congress began at 1 o'clock. Attendance was the largest. The resolution was carried unanimously. The resolutions (1) condemning the Madras government for openly backing the Carnatic Mills and recruiting labour to break the strike, (2) asking abolition of the Government Labour Commissioner, (3) condemning the Tata Company for unsympathetic attitude in not permitting the elected delegates of Jamshedpur Labour Association to attend the congress, (4) sympathising with the miserable position of Indian clerks, (5) asking increment of wages of the khansamas and other domestic servants, were duly moved and passed. Among the resolutions moved from the chair were (1) recommending prohibition of the export of foodstuffs until the country's needs are satisfied, (2) calling upon the world workers to help the starving Russian millions, (3) sending fraternal greetings to the workers of Great Britain, Ireland and Fiji Indians, (4) urging immediate abolition of the immoral indentured and forced labour, (5) sympathising with Madras postmen and the Cawnpore Labour Union, and (6) condemning action both of the Bombay government and Tata Company for the heartless treatment of the Mulshipeta satyagrahis.

Mr Debeswar on behalf of the Executive of the Trade Union Congress thanked the Reception Committee. Mr Ramjash Agarwalla, the Chairman, Reception Committee, thanked the President and the delegates.

The following further resolutions were passed by the Trade Union Congress.

That a Committee of the Trade Union Congress be appointed to inform the International Labour Organisation how far the resolutions of assemblies at Geneva and

Washington have been carried into effect by the government of India. That this congress strongly protests against government's refusal to ratify the recommendations of the Geneva International Labour Conference as such attitude is calculated to prejudice the prospects of Indian seamen by antagonising European comrades, and recommends the adoption of draft conventions relating to hours of work, the establishment of national seamen corps, unemployment insurance for seamen, abolition of broker system, and establishment of facilities for finding employment for seamen, etc., that Indian nautical institutes be established in each Indian seaport.

That this congress sends a message of sympathy to the starving millions of Russia and calls upon the workers of the world to help Russia in her struggle for peace, that this congress requests the Workers' Welfare League for India to ascertain how the state of unemployment of British workers can be speedily remedied by prompt cooperation between workers in India and those of Great Britain and Ireland. The Congress extends fraternal greetings to Indian workers in Fiji and other foreign parts, and instructs the Executive Committee to discover through communication with the workers in Fiji what Indian workers can do to help them in their struggle. That in case of strike sanctioned by the Trade Union Congress or its executive, the affiliated unions must contribute to maintain the strikers, if the strike extends over a period of more than a month and for this purpose instructs the Executive Committee to create special strikes insurance fund.

That the Congress resolves—in view of the offer of collieries proprietors—that a joint committee be formed to discuss the question in coalfields and the question of creation of machinery for amicable settlement between proprietors and miners. This congress instructs the Executive Committee to create under its authority powerful local executive committees at Madras, Calcutta, Jharia, Jamshedpur and other

important labour centres and assistance of exploited workers in all important centres. That the Executive Committee should take effective measures by all means in their power to compel Indian employers to provide modern housing for the workers fit for human habitation. This congress is of opinion that vital problems affecting labour will not receive proper attention until a ministry of labour, in which labour has confidence, is established, devoted to the interests of labour. This congress condemns war as in its opinion war entails endless sacrifice on the part of workers of the world and calls upon the world's workers to adopt concerted action in order to prevent international warfare. That in view of the prevailing tendency of Indians to prefer hand-spun and hand-woven clothes, the congress urges upon employers not to interfere with employees' choice to wear khadi except in cases of prescribed uniforms.

Mr Miller moved the railway resolutions, asking minimum wages, that gratuities and bonus should not be forfeited in case of declaration of strike by employees, that conditions regarding gratuity should be altered, making it a right, not a gift. Arrangements be made for proper housing, medical treatment and education of railwaymen and their children. That the contract system on railways in connection with the pay clerks, etc. be abolished and all treated as railway servants—that differential treatment on racial lines in regard to pay etc. should be abolished forthwith.

In the morning at the meeting of the Executive Committee a deputation of colliery proprietors who are members of the Indian Mining Federation which had issued circulars asking for the suppression of the congress arrived and apologised for their action, whereupon they drew up the following resolutions:

“That in view of the scandalous resolution passed by the Indian Mining Federation, without inviting any opinion of the local members, we, the undersigned colliery proprietors in a meeting assembled, hereby wholeheartedly sympathise

with the All-India Trade Union Congress and urge the Indian Mining Federation to withdraw the resolution or in the alternative that members should submit their resignations." The session then came to a close amidst scenes of enthusiasm. The secretary informed the Executive Committee that a message containing extracts of the presidential address, wired to the *Daily Herald*, London, had been held up at Bombay and called for the Executive's meeting this morning to decide what action should be taken.

(*Bombay Chronicle*, 6 December 1921)

Extracts from the Indian Annual Register 1922

ALL INDIA TRADE UNION CONGRESS
JHARIA, 30 NOVEMBER 1921

The All India Trade Union Congress held its second session (first session, 1920, at Bombay under Lala Lajpat Rai — See AR 1921) at Jharia, Bengal on the 30th November last with Mr Joseph Baptista as the President and Mr Ramjash Agarwalla as the Chairman of the Reception Committee. There was a large attendance of the colliery and railway workers, and representatives of labour from Bombay and Madras also attended.

In the course of the speech Seth Ramjash Agarwalla, the Chairman of the Reception Committee, said: "I am myself an employer of labour, but this association with colliery work for the last 22 years at Jharia furnished me ample opportunity to acquaint myself with the ugly features of the mines labour. The difference between the mineowners' affluence and the coolies' starvation wages is monstrous. In fact, the unequal struggle for bare existence has been such an oppressive experience that I shall be false to myself if I do not redeem, at least in part, the debt I owe to ill-used labour. Today, we are no longer leading labour, but are led by it. Labour in Europe is playing for high stakes. It wants to reconstitute society, tear up the present economic system,

do away with the private ownership of land and capital and transfer all property from the individual to the community. Socialism is not new to India. To that end, therefore, the people of India must learn unity. Peasantry and artisans have again to be set on their feet. Strikes have now become a common feature of the Indian labour movement. Last year, there were altogether 183 strikes in India, involving over three lakhs of workers. Only a small number were completely or partially successful. Strikes have their uses, but should not be entered upon lightly for minor grievances. When you have to fight with the capitalistic government, you must first make sure of your capacity to offer sustained, organised and peaceful resistance before deciding on strike."

THE PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

In the course of his Presidential Address Mr Joseph Baptista said the cupidity of capitalists inflamed trade jealousies and was really responsible for the subjection of India. The real remedy was to put a brake on that cupidity by fixing the maximum profit of capital by domestic legislation. "Without a national government", he continued, "we cannot promote international solidarity, without political power we cannot solve economic problems. Many friends imagine they can have swadeshi before swaraj. This is putting the cart before the horse. We may have swaraj. True swadeshi can only be reached by tariffs, but tariffs mean fiscal freedom, which is utterly incompatible with foreign rule. Therefore, we must first seek swaraj."

The President suggested the early establishment of a labour ministry, adding that the comparative indifference of the government to labour interests and problems was intolerable, considering that labour constituted 90 per cent of the population and contributed 80 per cent revenue to the government. Labour problems demanded an energetic policy and a generous budget, even if half the army had

to be disbanded. It was a gigantic problem, but it was chiefly the creation of British rule and commerce. The unfavourable position of labour in India was due to the want of trade unions to regulate the moral and material conditions of the workers. It would be the business of the congress to suggest measures to alleviate matters.

“Our ambition”, he said, “is to make the congress the ‘national’ organ of labour. Our policy must be to steer clear of extreme individualism and bolshevism and follow the golden mean of fabian socialism. But the Trade Union Congress cannot dispense with politics. The fact is that at the bottom there is a fear that the masses will wrench from the classes political power by combination. This fear must be greater in India, where the power is in the hands of foreigners. Besides, direct action, even for political ends, had been sanctioned by British labour. There is, therefore, no reason for the Trade Union Congress to boycott politics. Measures for the workers’ welfare should include education, sanitation, workmen’s compensation, nationalisation of land, railways, coalmines, jute and tea and exportation of food-stuffs.”

Proceeding he said: “The moment of the prince’s visit is inopportune. When his coming was announced by Lord Reading, I felt he was to be the messenger of swaraj. He may still be the harbinger of swaraj. The fact is the workers of the world have learnt a lesson from the war that no nation should govern another nation without its consent. England can now keep India in subjection only by force. But it is as sure as that night follows day if Mr Gandhi does not win by soul force, 10,000 secret societies will spring up in India ready for brute force. The prince had a grand opportunity of immortalising himself as the Prince of Peace by proclaiming orbi et urbi, that the right remedy for India is swaraj.”

The secretary then read messages of sympathy from a number of leading Indian politicians, also from the Workers’

Welfare League, London, Scottish Trades Union Congress, Glasgow, Irish Labour Party, Dublin, the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, the General Council of the British Trades Union Congress, London, the Independent Labour Party and the General Union of Textile Workers, Huddersfield. Mr J. H. Pattinson, MLC, a sympathetic colliery proprietor, attended.

THE SWARAJ RESOLUTION

The following resolution was adopted:

“This congress declares that the time has now arrived for the attainment of swarajya by the people of India.”

Mr Chaman Lall who moved the resolution said that the workers were the property of the nation. The only obstacles to the national freedom were the Indian capitalists who with foreign capitalists exploited the workers. Under swaraj that would be stopped.

Mr E. L. Iyer who seconded said that the Madras Central Labour Board had a rule under which politics were taboo, but the experience of the past two years showed that that policy was wrong.

Mr J. B. Miller in supporting said that he represented about one lakh of railway workers, European and Indian, who were all in favour of swaraj which was the birth right of the Indian nation.

Mr K. C. Choudhury, MLC, who also supported the resolution but was against introducing politics in trade unions, said, the workers wanted swaraj to remove penal laws against themselves and generally to remove barbarous social conditions in the country.

Swami Viswananda, Jharia miners' leader, who seconded said that although the miners produced coal wealth they saw the spectacle today of the coal dealers living luxurious lives while the miners lived in holes and worked without

adequate food and clothing. The coal miners led wretched lives and their pitiable condition needed drastic remedy. He warned the colliery proprietors against the policy of drift which would eventually open the floodgates of bolshevism in India.

On the second day, 1 December 1921, a resolution recommending Indian workmen to adopt swadeshi and encourage hand-spinning and hand-weaving, moved by Srimati Savitri Devi, a young Gurkha lady, seconded by Dr Murari Lal of Cawnpore and supported by three other speakers, was unanimously adopted. Another important resolution was moved as follows:

“The congress deplores the miserable conditions of life, employment of coalminers of Bihar-Bengal which cry aloud for the following immediate remedial measures: Reduction of hours of work, increase in the rate of wages, education, housing, compensation for injuries, etc. and authorises the Executive Committee to confer with the colliery owners and managers to adopt effective measures.”

The resolution was moved by Swami Darsanananda and seconded by Swami Viswananda.

Mr J. H. Pattinson, MLC, speaking on this resolution, said, “As a representative of the employers of colliery labour, I may state definitely we are entirely in sympathy with labour. Our desire is to see labour well treated, well housed, well looked after. Further, we desire to see the standard of colliery labour raised. We are prepared to grant reasonable labour demands. On the other hand, we are justified, I think, in asking labour to cooperate with us and give us more coal by working six days a week. Further, I propose the collieries should start schools for miners’ children. Also my advice to miners is: should any colliery proprietor not give you decent houses to live in, leave that colliery and go to a better one. The same remark applies to wages, water supply and general conditions. Another word: do not drink too much. It will spoil your health and make you so weak that you won’t be

able to work at all. I don't say give up drink entirely. But drink in moderation. We are entirely in accord with the trade union movement for coalfields and are prepared to afford every assistance. With such an organisation in being disputes and grievances can very easily be settled and a great many cases of misunderstandings, which occurred in the past, will never again arise. Let us work together, capital and labour, and do not let us quarrel. I offer you the helping hand and if you accept it you will not regret it."

The congress reassembled on the 2nd December and the miners attended in even greater numbers. There was a great commotion over the action of the capitalist mineowners, specially European, who had tried to influence government and make them declare the holding of the conference illegal. The first resolution condemned the circular containing the resolutions passed by the Indian Mining Federation and the Indian Mining Association, and uttered a warning that such an attitude as disclosed by the resolutions would promulgate bitterest class war between the employers and employees.

The circular in question contained two resolutions, one expressing the opinion that the holding of the congress in the present disturbed state of labour and general political unrest throughout India was likley to lead to serious trouble and danger of breach of peace and that the holding of the proposed meeting anywhere within 200 miles of the coalfields should be prohibited. Another said, if the government would not prohibit the congress, the joint meeting demanded a full and immediate provision for the protection of life and property of European and Indian residents and employers of labour and for the maintenance of law and order.

In the morning at the meeting of the Executive Committee a deputation of colliery proprietors who are members of the Indian Mining Federation which had issued the circulars arrived and apologised for their action whereupon they made the following declaration :

“That in view of the scandalous resolution embodied in Circular No. 32 of 24th November passed by the Indian Mining Federation, without inviting any opinion of local members, we, the undersigned colliery proprietors, in meeting assembled, hereby wholeheartedly sympathise with the All India Trade Union Congress and urge the Indian Mining Federation to withdraw the resolution or in the alternative the members should submit their resignations.”

Mr J. P. Keshavji Pitambar moved the resolution and was supported by Dr Kanauji and R. Mucadum and others.

This created a tremendous sensation and when the congress met the first resolution to be moved was as follows :

“That this congress condemns the attitude taken up by Indian Mining Association, the Indian Mining Federation and the Chamber of Commerce and warns these bodies that this would only precipitate the bitterest of class wars between the employer and the employees.”

This was moved by Seth Ramjash Agarwalla and passed by a tumultuous enthusiasm.

The Secretary, Indian Mining Federation, on behalf of the colliery proprietors, thereupon made amends by stating in the congress that the Gujarati colliery owners had that day agreed to grant several concessions to the miners regarding clothing, better housing, abolition of grog shops, sanitation, primary education, payment of sick allowance, gratuity, compensation for injury, etc. This was held as a great triumph for the congress.

The second resolution of the day condemned the action alleged to have been taken in certain collieries in dismissing some workmen for attending the congress.

Mr Miller speaking on the resolution said that the colliery proprietors who acted in that way ought to be made to apologise to the congress. Otherwise the only course left to them will be to declare a general strike in which event he (Miller) would gladly take up the miners' leadership.

OTHER RESOLUTIONS PASSED

1. That a committee of the Trade Union Congress be appointed with one official to inform the International Labour Organisation how far the resolutions of the League of Nations Assemblies at Genoa and Washington have been carried into effect by the government of India.

2. That this congress strongly protests against the refusal to ratify the conditions of the Genoa International Conference, as such attitude is calculated to prejudice prospects of Indian seamen by antagonising European comrades and recommends the adoption of draft conventions relating to hours of work, establish national seamen codes, unemployment insurance for seamen, abolition of broker and ghat serang system and establishing facilities for finding employment for seamen.

3. That Indian National Institutes be established in each Indian seaport.

4. That this congress sends its message of sympathy to the starving millions of Russia and calls upon the workers of the world to help Russia in her struggle for peace.

5. That this congress requests the Workers' Welfare League for India to ascertain how the state of unemployment of British workers can be speedily remedied by prompt cooperation between workers in India and those of Great Britain and Ireland.

6. That this congress extends its fraternal greetings to Indian workers in Fiji and other foreign parts and instructs its Executive Committee to discover through communication with workers in Fiji what Indian workers can do to help them in their struggle.

7. That in case of strikes sanctioned by the Trade Union Congress or its executive the affiliated unions must contri-

bute to maintain strikers if the strike extends over a period of more than a month, and for this purpose instructs the Executive Committee to start special strike insurance fund.

8. That this congress resolves in view of the affair of colliery proprietors that a joint committee be formed to discuss question of improvement of the present condition of labour in coalfields and the question of creating machinery for amicable settlement between proprietors and miners.

9. This congress instructs its Executive Committee to create under its authority powerful local executive committees at Madras, Calcutta, Jharia, Jamshedpur and other important labour centres and conduct the work of organisation or supervision and assistance of exploited workers in all important centres.

10. That the Executive Committee should take effective measures by all means in their power to compel Indian employers to provide modern housing for the workers fit for human habitation.

11. This congress is of opinion that vital problems would not receive proper attention until a ministry of labour in which labour has confidence is established devoted to the interest of labour.

12. This congress condemns war, as in its opinion war entails useless sacrifice on the part of the workers of the world, and calls upon the world workers to adopt concerted action in order to prevent international warfare.

13. That in view of the prevailing tendency of Indians to prefer hand-spun and hand-woven clothes this congress urges upon employers not to interfere with employees' choice to wear khadi except in cases of prescribed uniforms.

14. That in regard to railway workers a scale of minimum wages should be fixed, that gratuities and bonus should not be forfeited in case of declaration of strike by employees,

and that conditions regarding gratuity should be altered making it a right and not a gift.

15. Arrangements be made for the proper housing, medical treatment and education of railwaymen and their children.

16. That the contract system on railways in connection with pay clerks etc. should be abolished and all be treated as railway servants.

17. That differential treatment on racial lines in regard to pay etc. should be abolished forthwith.

Addenda

I. Tilak Trial Disturbances—1908*

In accordance with the orders of government contained in their Circular No. 4403, dated 25 June 1900, I have the honour to report for the information of government the circumstances which attended the trial of Bal Gangadhar Tilak and the disturbances which took place in Bombay as soon as his conviction became known.

2. As Tilak was good deal mixed up with Paranjape's case I will commence with the trial of the latter. On 11 June 1908 S. M. Paranjape, editor of the *Kul*, was arrested in Poona and brought to Bombay for trial. Though Paranjape himself was practically unknown in Bombay, his paper had been widely read here for a long time, and the knowledge that it advocated the views of Tilak and other extremists made it an organ of some moment. The arrest and trial of the editor, therefore, caused a good deal of excitement and this excitement was no doubt fostered by the advent of Tilak himself who came on knowing that his friend and admirer had been arrested and did his utmost to assist him in his defence. Mr Paranjape was eventually convicted in the High Court and sentenced to 19 months' rigorous imprisonment on 8 July 1908.

3. Meanwhile Tilak was arrested for offences under sections 124-A and 153-A, Indian Penal Code, in Bombay, on 24 June. On 29 June first hearing of his case came on in the court of the Chief Presidency Magistrate. During the course of the day large crowds collected outside the courthouse, and becom-

* From G. D. Volume 114 of 1908, Letter No. 10503-6-R, dated 27 August 1908, from H: G. GELL, Esqr., M.V.O., Commissioner of Police, Bombay to the SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT, Judicial Department.

ing disorderly had to be dispersed. One Kanchan Kumar, a swadeshi preacher, took up a position on the maidan and did much to excite the feelings of the crowd by his harangue, but On 29 June first hearing of his case came on in the court him, he disappeared, and was not arrested till subsequently. Whilst being dispersed the crowd stoned the police and such Europeans as were near at the time and eight arrests had to be made.

No further trouble was experienced till after the case had been adjourned for the day and the court had been closed, when remnants of the unlawful assembly re congregated and commenced to stone isolated Europeans passing along Cruikshank Road.

The Venerable the Archdeacon of Bombay and a professor of the St Xavier's College were amongst those who received injuries from stones.

The arrival of some European police officers and native police on the scene soon put a stop to the desultory stone-throwing, and the members of disorder were chased away not to reappear.

4. An incident worth mentioning is that on this day, the 29th, the first issue of the extremist paper, styled the *Rashtra Mata*, appeared. One of the last acts of Tilak, on the day he was arrested, was the final settlement of the management of this paper. Tilak is reported to have stated that he was aware that a warrant had been issued for his arrest, if so, it is probable that he had a hand in the articles which appeared in the first issue of this paper and it is intelligible, therefore, that its articles on the 29th June should have been aimed at lowering government and exalting Tilak. It was sold in thousands that day by newsboys, tobacconists, etc.

5. Tilak's application for bail and its refusal by the High Court caused almost as much consternation as his arrest and was made use of to demonstrate the animus of government against Tilak.

6. All sorts of rumours became current about this time and one of the arguments used to gain the sympathy of the masses, specially the mill-hands, was that government were displeased with Tilak because he interested himself in the temperance and

swadeshi movements, movements which caused loss of revenue to government etc.

7. During the time which elapsed between the committal of the case to the High Court and its trial there, Tilak's friends and sympathisers came down to Bombay from all parts of the presidency, and the interval was made use of by them and friends already in Bombay to stir up the feelings of the people against government. All vernacular papers drove a roaring trade, while a great deal of quiet preaching was done in chals and private places. No stone was left unturned to show the world the sympathy with which Tilak was regarded in India. Amongst other things it was decided to endeavour to induce all mill-hands in Bombay to strike, and to proceed to the High Court in large numbers.

8. There are 85 mills in Bombay employing some 100,000 hands, of which at least 50,000 must be able-bodied. Anyone able to enlist the sympathy of so large a number of men must occupy a powerful position and, if intent on disorder, can practically set all authority at defiance. Tilak had no doubt considered this point and, for some time before his arrest, had endeavoured to gain them over. The large majority of mill-hands are Marathas, and Tilak is a Brahmin, but that did not stand in his way. Since December last he devoted his attention to them and on the 15th of that month he addressed a meeting of them at Chinchpoo gly, in which he spoke to the following effect:

His object, he said, in holding the meeting at Chinchpoo gly was to educate the mill-hands, who numbered about 2 lakhs—perhaps more in number than all the British forces in India—on the truths and benefits of swadeshi. It had been alleged that swadeshi had been brought into existence for the benefit of Brahmins. That was not so. It was for the advantage of all and if all the people embraced swadeshism, the poverty of the country and people would not be so great. The work in mills would increase and the employees would be benefited. He also spoke strongly against the use of intoxicating liquors and advised his hearers to give them up and said that though government were making great efforts to popularise inoculation, they did nothing to minimise the liquor evil.

9. Subsequently the temperance movement in Poona, Ahmed-

nagar, Belgaum, etc. came into prominence. Tilak came again to Bombay on 6 and 7 June. On the night of 6 June he attended a Sattya Narayana Puja held by mill-hands at Victoria Road and the following day addressed a mass meeting at Chinch-pooly as below :

He stated that the income to government from abkari alone exceeded the total revenue of the Maratha empire, that the policy of government in these days was to encourage drunkenness and that if people attempted to advise others not to drink they were prosecuted for so doing by government officials. He advised the mill-hands, specially the jobbers and head jobbers, to form committees of mill-hands in their respective mills for the purpose of discouraging liquor drinking amongst the mill-hands. Khaparde was present with Tilak at the meeting.

10. It is clear from this that Tilak had considered the advisability of gaining the sympathies of mill-hands and teaching them how to organise, and had he been vouchsafed a longer period of liberty, would no doubt in time have had a large organised body of mill-hands at his disposal.

Fortunately he was arrested in time and though no doubt his followers will try and carry on his work, I do not think they have yet succeeded in doing much.

11. It cannot be said with any truth that in the late disorders, the mill-hands carried on any organised movements. A large number were induced to take oaths not to work on certain days, but there was no unanimity amongst the mass of them. If there had been, we should not have seen the hands of one mill breaking the windows of other mills to get the employees out.

12. However, one thing at this time was pretty clear and that was that either at the trial or after it large bodies of mill-hands would attempt to make demonstrations at or near the High Court, and that, if allowed to assemble in any great masses, they might become disorderly and cause a great deal of damage not only to property but also to life. To prevent this and to be in a position to put down with a strong hand all attempts at disorder and not allow the disorderly element for even a moment to obtain the upper hand, it became necessary to consider the question of military assistance, in the event of the police proving unable to cope with the situation.

13. General Greenfield whom I consulted at this juncture was most sympathetic and expressed his great willingness to answer calls made on him. After some discussion he came to the conclusion that the garrison was not sufficiently strong to afford the necessary number of men with reliefs, and he consequently arranged forthwith that additional troops, including some native cavalry, should be brought to Bombay.

14. As a police precaution I issued a notification under section 23(3) prohibiting assemblies throughout the city during certain dates . . . I also sent for a jobber named Deoji Gunoo and a Doctor Salunkey. Both these men were said to possess great influence amongst mill-hands generally and as it was known that they had taken a prominent part in the movement started by Tilak, it was generally believed that they would have a great deal to say with reference to a strike amongst mill-hands. I warned them both of the danger they ran in fomenting trouble, and advised them to use all their influence on the side of government.

15. Later on I interviewed almost all the mill-owners in Bombay, and asked them to use their influence in keeping their hands in order, as it was generally rumoured that in the event of Tilak being convicted they intended to strike and make demonstrations.

16. On 13 July at 11.30 a.m. the trial of Tilak before the Hon. Mr Justice Davar and a special jury began.

17. In consequence of the danger of a disturbance on each occasion Tilak was conveyed to and from between the common jail and the High Court during the course of the trial, the route being considerable in length and through the heart of the native town, the Honourable the Chief Justice arranged that he should be kept in a temporary lock up in the High Court building.

Tilak was accordingly brought to court early on the morning of the 13th and kept there till Friday evening, the 17th, when the courts adjourned till Monday morning. He was then removed to the common jail and remained there (till) Sunday evening, when he was again taken back to the High Court which became his residence until the close of his trial.

18. In connection with this temporary lock up, 12 European

officers, 24 unarmed native officers and 10 armed men were requisitioned for duty during the time the court rose until it reassembled, i.e. from 5.30 p.m. to 11.30 a.m.

19. During the sitting of the court 20 European police officers, 11 armed, 190 unarmed and 30 mounted native officers and men were on duty in and about the court. In addition to the above there was a military detachment of one commissioned officer and 50 rank and file posted in the University Hall.

20. On the 13th, numbers of mill-hands, and otherwise employed natives, made their way into the Fort and attempted to assemble near the High Court. They were kept moving throughout the day by the police and the cavalry, and dispersed in the evening.

21. 14 July 1908—On 14 July, all the mills were working and in consequence of their experience on the 13th but few natives made their way into the Fort.

22. 15 July 1908—on 15 July, a few hands of the Sun Mill absented themselves, but not in connection with Tilak.

23. 16 July 1908—On 16 July, the Queen and the Lakmidas Mills struck work to go and see Tilak's trial, and 320 employees of 4 other mills absented themselves on the same pretext.

24. 17 July 1908—On 17 July, 28 mills stopped working, some of them compelled to do so by the hands of other mills. The latter went about in gangs breaking with stones the windows of the mills in which the operatives had assembled and commenced to work.

This meant some 35,000 mill-hands free for mischief for once the unwilling hands were driven out, the spirit of unrest seemed to seize them.

Owing to the reports which had been received troops and the magistrates had been called out.

25. I was at the Greaves Cotton Mills at 6 p.m. Delisle Road where I had gone on learning of the unruly attitude of the hands, I found on arrival Mr Dastur, Mr Setalvad and native cavalry. Under their eyes the hands, some 10,000 in number, were filing out quietly, though they had commenced to break the furniture inside the mills prior to the arrival of the cavalry.

26. While there Mr J. C. Sumption of the *Advocate of India* brought information that some Europeans whilst passing through

Curry Road had been mobbed and assaulted, and had taken refuge in a liquor shop in that road. Curry Road, I may explain, runs at right angles between Delisle and Supari Bag Roads and crosses the two railways, the BB & CI and GIP. Along nearly the whole length of this road there are chals on either side, occupied by mill-hands. In all they must number nearly 6,000 and they and the hands living on Kala Chowki Road are the most rowdy in Bombay. Europeans employed on the railways must use this road on their way to and from work.

27. On receipt of the information I at once proceeded to the spot in my motor car with a few European officers and men, the magistrates and the cavalry following. The liquor shop had been wrecked, while the three Europeans, railway employees, were concealed in an inner room by the Parsi liquor seller. They were taken out and escorted to the station. Proceeding along the road to find out whether another European said to have been assaulted could be rescued, we were greeted by a volley of stones from inside the courtyard of a chal. We rushed in but stones continuing to be hurled by a mob of men, who refused to desist, some revolver shots were fired. No one was injured. Just then Mr Dastur and Mr Setalvad arrived with the cavalry, and in company with them we passed through the courtyard in which were three lines of chals.

28. As stated, there are chal buildings on either side of the road, and had the leading party not been checked, others would have joined in and a very dangerous situation would have arisen, whilst, had not information been promptly brought, there is not the slightest doubt that the three Europeans would have been murdered.

29. A similar incident happened in the riots of 1898, when two soldiers were dragged out of a liquor shop in Grant Road, where they had taken refuge, and were killed with sticks and stones.

30. *18 July 1908*—On 18 July, the employees in the Crescent Mill struck work in consequence of Tilak's prosecution.

31. *19 July 1908*—On Sunday, the 19th, all mills were closed, but everything was quiet.

32. *20 July 1908*—About 6 a.m. on the 20th whilst the employees of the Morarji Gokuldas Mill were going in to their

work, their mill was stoned by hands of the Jacob Sassoon Mill who had decided not to work. Disorder took place and the police who were on the spot were attacked by stones, a European officer being especially picked out. Whilst this was going on I appeared on the scene and what happened then is described in a telegram I sent to government. I reproduce the wording:

“At 6.20 this morning I got information that Jacob Sassoon Mill hands about four thousand were out and creating disturbance. I motored to scene and moved half military detachment to corner, Curry Road East. Superintendent and inspector and I then walked up Curry Road driving the mob in front. Mob retreated for some distance and then turned, formed up and stoned us heavily. I warned them to desist and disperse and continued to advance. Stone throwing became more violent, I then fired my revolver as did the superintendent and inspector with me. Some rioters wounded. Casualties uncertain, military half detachment on hearing firing doubled up, but crowd had dispersed. A number of coolies working in godowns at the Grain Bazar and a few cart drivers struck work.”

33. *21 July 1908*—Some coolies employed in godowns at the Grain Bazar prevented carts from carrying goods belonging to Europeans along Frere Road, in some cases overturning the carts and throwing the goods out on to the road. Foot and mounted police under the superintendent of police, B division, restored order.

34. This day also mill-hands belonging to four mills struck work, in connection with Tilak.

35. Notices in the Marathi language were found pasted up in the water-closet of the Maneckji Petit Mills, Tardeo. The translation ran to the following effect: “Why are you asleep? Awake, be ready, and assist your Parel comrades.”

36. *22 July 1908*—This day all the mills were working as usual. At 9.40 p.m. Tilak was convicted and sentenced to six years' transportation. He was immediately sent away by special train to Ahmedabad.

37. It is said that on this day the cloth-shop employees of the Mulji Jetha Market held a meeting, at which they decided

not to attend work for six days, one day per each year of Tilak's imprisonment.

38. 23 July 1908—The fact of Mr Tilak's conviction became known this day, and nine mills struck work out of sympathy for him. The cloth market, the grain market, freight and share market and cotton exchange closed their business.

39. At 2 p.m. about 200 men and boys rushed round Girgaum, Sonapur, Chandanwadi and Lohar Street and forced shops to be closed. On a posse of police being sent to intercept them, the crowd dispersed. Two men were arrested and charged before a magistrate under section 122 of Act IV of 1902, and on conviction were sentenced to eight days' rigorous imprisonment each.

40. 24 July 1908—This morning 70 mills stopped work. At an early hour some mill-hands belonging to the Western India Mill situated at Kala Chowki Road stoned the Bombay Cotton Mill which had commenced work, with the result that the employees came out and joined them. The crowd then proceeded along Chinchpogly Road where they stoned the Rachel Sassoon Mill and the E. D. Sassoon Mill, causing the employees to come out. At this juncture Superintendent Mayers and Subinspector Finan arrived on the scene and they kept the crowd moving along Chinchpogly Road till it reached its junction with Albert Road. Here other police officers came up and the mob divided into two parties. One went into Albert Road and brought the hands of the City of Bombay Mill out by stoning the mill, who joined with them, and were dispersed by a party of cavalry under Lieutenant Summers, while the others drove the police down the Chinchpogly Road stoning them to such an extent that they had to fire their revolvers on them, killing three and wounding others. Superintendent Mayers and Subinspector Finan who bore the brunt of the attack received several injuries from stones, also Subinspector Home.

41. Another party of mill-hands came suddenly on Inspector De Burgh and Subinspector Guider at the junction of Corupdeo and Connaught Roads and stoned them savagely. A victoria driver who was passing with a wounded man, seeing the peril, placed the wounded man on ground and drove to their assist-

ance, managing to rescue them in time to save their lives. The inspector had received a nasty wound on the head and must have fallen a victim but for the timely intervention of the ghariwalla.

42. Meanwhile the military had been sent for from the By-culla Bridge, where a detachment of 50 Royal Scots had previously been stationed and whilst they were coming by train the crowds along Parel Road stoned them. The fourth presidency magistrate, Mr C. H. Setalvad, came up about this time, and a squad of military was sent with him to disperse a mob throwing stones at the junction of Ulster and Sussex Roads. The mobs nothing daunted by the approaching military stoned them, and continuing to do so notwithstanding the magistrate's orders to disperse, seven rounds were fired at them. One person only was found injured.

43. About 9 a.m. whilst the cavalry were proceeding along Gorupdeo Road dispersing a large crowd from every direction. Lieutenant Summers who was in charge accompanied by a European police subinspector fired a few rounds as did two native officers with him. Casualties not discovered. Further on in the same neighbourhood Lieutenant Robertson in charge of a party of the Royal Scots, which had been stationed near the P & O Dockyard, with Inspector Murray attached, came on the scene and had to open fire on a crowd of mill-hands armed with sticks, who were stoning the police and the military. One man was picked up dead.

On both these latter occasions I came up shortly after and, from what I could discern of the circumstances, considered that both military officers had shown a wise discretion.

44. At noon 1,400 employees of the GIP Railway workshops at Parel failed to resume work after luncheon, but they went home peacefully.

45. About 1 p.m. information was brought to the police that rioters had attacked the Turkey Red Dye Works at Mahim, and attempted to wreck the place.

Superintendent Okeeffe with some police accompanied by Lieutenant Reed, Royal Scots, and four men went to the scene. They found that Abraham Cohen, the caretaker, had been brutally assaulted, and that the manager, J. Cornarman had

to use his shotgun in defence of himself, his wife and children. In doing so he wounded one Bala Sakharam.

The manager, his wife and children were escorted to the railway station and sent into the Fort. Seven persons were arrested.

46. Lieutenant Reed, Superintendent Okeeffe and party then returned to the headquarters, and whilst on route they were set on by a large crowd of mill employees on strike near the Pipe Road. Lieutenant Reed seeing that the police were overpowered and, at their request, took command and ordered his men to fire. Four rounds were used and two men were shot dead and one man injured.

47. A little before 3 p.m. the mill-hands resident on the east side of the GIP railway-line at Curry Road partially wrecked the Curry Road Station and the stoning was so heavy that the Poona Mail was delayed.

The military (volunteers) and police on receiving information at once proceeded to the spot to disperse the crowd. They were met with volleys of stones and on being ordered to desist the crowd refused to obey the order. The Hon'ble A. Hill Trevor, additional presidency magistrate, ordered the military under the command of Lieutenant Taylor to disperse the rioters. This order was obeyed. Several rounds were fired, 5 were picked up and 15 injured persons were removed to the J. J. Hospital.

48. *25 July 1908*—On the morning of the 25th the Textile Mills began to work; the mill-hands were perfectly orderly and all was proceeding satisfactorily, when a horde of mill employees belonging to the Standard Mill, situated a short distance off, rushed up, stoned and attempted to wreck the mill, and attacked the European employees. Finding themselves hard pressed the Europeans fired a few shots.

49. The Hon'ble A. Hill Trevor and I were at this time turning into Delisle Road from Elphinstone Road and on hearing the shots we motored up to the spot. I ordered the crowd to disperse but they failed to do so. The Hon'ble A. Hill Trevor then opened fire and two men dropped. The crowd still remained in a hostile attitude nor far distant, and I therefore telephoned for a detachment of military from Jacob's Circle.

Whilst so engaged the cavalry with Mr Philips, deputy commissioner, came up, and the assembly dispersed.

50. Seventy-six mills struck work this day. Thirty-one street lamps were broken along Sewari and Kala Chowki Roads.

51. *26 July 1908*—His Excellency the Governor arrived in Bombay from Poona on the 26th.

52. Sir Vithaldas Damodar Thackersey called a meeting of the Bombay Native Piece Goods Association to discuss the question of opening of the cloth shops. It was decided to open the market on the following day.

53. *27 July 1908*—On the morning of the 27th Ranchordas Jadhavjee Thackersey came to Shaik Memon Street and opened his shop. On seeing this the servants of other cloth shops collected and created a disturbance. Ranchordas called the market peons to his assistance. Coming up, a free fight took place, and Ranchordas thereupon closed his shop and went away.

Lukmidas Morarji, J.P., owner of the several shops then came on the scene and lectured the employees, but they refused to listen, saying that they had taken an oath not to resume work for six days.

54. Later on in the day it was rumoured that His Excellency the Governor intended driving through the native town and taking Shaik Memon Street en route. This was at once seized upon as a good opportunity to make a demonstration in favour of Tilak. Black flags were hung across the street with Tilak's photograph and the words "Tilak Maharaj-ki-jai" on them. The street became blocked from end to end with a dense crowd of people, all hostile and demonstrative. A party of European and native police under Superintendent Flanagan came to the spot and attempted to clear the street and restore order, and as the crowd refused to disperse charged them repeatedly. The crowd retaliated and stoned them and continued to do so. A party of cavalry with the deputy commissioner passed through later on and they too were stoned. At about 5.20 p.m. a detachment of the Northampton Regiment under the command of Captain Rawlins came up, and they were stoned also. The police who had remained in the street, notwithstanding the

cruel stoning they were undergoing, and had refrained from firing on the crowd in spite of the greatest provocation, were now able to make nine arrests from a house of which the occupants had made themselves conspicuous throughout. The nine men were subsequently convicted and sentenced to nine months' rigorous imprisonment each.

55. The stone-throwing however had not abated and about 5 p.m. Mr Dracup, third presidency magistrate, arrived. After attempting in vain for some considerable time to persuade the stone-throwers to desist, he ordered the military to fire. Four rounds were fired and four persons were picked up suffering from bullet wounds. Things then quieted down, and the military withdrew from the spot.

56. Later on news was received at the Head Police Office that the house of Mr M. J. S. Shroff was attacked and that the rioters were trying to set fire to it. A military guard was at once despatched to his residence, and the mob was dispersed by the police.

57. *28 July 1908*—The weavers of the Maneckji Petit Mills after going into the mill in an orderly manner struck work at 7.30 a.m. and they induced the other hands to go on strike for the day. Seeing this the manager immediately shut down the engines and the employees began to leave the mill shouting out "Tilak Maharaj-ki-jai" and became very turbulent.

The police who were present dispersed them, whereon a number rushed into the compound and began to throw stones from there. The guard of the Northhamptons turned out and on their approach the hands cleared off.

58. At 9.30 a.m. information was received that a large crowd had assembled at the ordinarily peaceful locality of Thakurdwar and were stoning Europeans in motor cars, carriages and tram cars, and were preventing clerks, etc., from going to work in their offices. The police and military hastened to the scene when the crowd dispersed. The military were withdrawn.

59. At 11 a.m. the crowd again assembled and recommenced their tactics of stoning and attacking Europeans. Information was also received that the whole of Girgaum Road as far as

Kandewady was in a state of disorder, and that large stone slabs had been placed across the tram lines. On the approach of the military the crowd melted away. The military withdrew and a police post was kept at Thakurdwar.

60. At 2 p.m. the military had again to be called to the spot as disorder had recommenced. On arrival they were received with volleys of stones from the side streets. Higher up the police clearing the street were severely stoned, and had to fire three revolver shots in self-defence. No one was injured but the stone throwing ceased and the crowd dispersed. This occurred near Kandewady. At other parts of Girgaum Road, viz Thakurdwar, the stoning of the military and the police continued, and Mr James McDonald, present in his capacity of additional presidency magistrate, received a severe blow from a large stone thrown at him. The thrower was seen in the act, and was arrested later in the day, and on being charged was convicted and sentenced to 18 months' rigorous imprisonment. Eight other persons were arrested and sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment each.

61. During the day Europeans in different parts of the town, proceeding to their ordinary avocations, were stoned and though but few complaints were made, there is no doubt but that the feeling against Europeans was most hostile. Much trouble would have ensued had not the military been posted at different points throughout the island.

64. It is satisfactory to know that throughout the trouble at no point did the Mahomedans join in the disorder, and though strenuous attempts were made by the Hindus to induce them to join forces, they resisted all attempt. Not a small number of Mahomedans are employed in the mills, and at one time a most resentful feeling sprang up amongst them against the Hindu mill-hands, who so persistently forced the engines to be closed down and the work stopped, thus causing them the risk of a loss of pay. I am inclined to think that had the disturbance continued much longer this feeling might have eventually brought them into actual contest with their Hindu employers.

65. The arrival in Bombay of His Excellency the Governor on the 26th was most timely, and his presence in the city, for some days, until in fact quiet had been restored, helped much in relieving the situation.

66. It is a question whether, if Tilak had not been arrested and tried in Bombay, much feeling would have been evinced on his behalf here.

For years past the popularity of Tilak has steadily been growing in the presidency and other parts of India, and many natives, even those who do not belong to the extremist party and who do not think with him, look upon him as a man actuated wholly by his desire to ameliorate the condition of Indians, and respect and admire him. He possesses a personality, and wherever he used to address the people, he gained adherents. But even where he was not personally known his fame spread, especially amongst the working classes, partly through the efforts of certain of the vernacular press and partly owing to the many agents who were sent abroad to preach about him and his works. By many he is revered and in countless houses pictures of him are hung on the wall. In Bombay city the "Bombay National Union", sided by the paper called the *Hind Swarajya*, had brought him to the notice of thousands. This paper was produced under the support of Shyamji K. Verma, through his nephew Nitisen Dwarkadas. Its tone from the commencement was most rabid against government and its nonsuppression for so long gave people the impression that government were afraid to deal with the situation. Eventually the editor C. L. Thanawalla was prosecuted, convicted and sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment on 15 May 1907. A new editor was immediately forthcoming in the person of T. P. Mangrolwalla, but as the tone of the paper did not improve he too was prosecuted and on 2 July last convicted and sentenced to three years' rigorous imprisonment. On 30 May last during one of the hearings of the case a large crowd assembled in and near the court-house, which becoming an "unlawful assembly", had to be dispersed. Eight arrests were made and the accused were dealt with.

67. Other papers which also preached Tilak were the *Vihart* and the *Arunodaya*, both of them Marathi papers. Editors

of both papers were arrested for offences under section 124-A and 153-A of the Indian Penal Code and they were both convicted, the former to three years' rigorous imprisonment and the later to 14 months' rigorous imprisonment.

68. In addition to the writings in these papers, much was done to popularise him by preachers who harangued audiences on the Chowpatty sands. They purported to be lectures on swadeshi merely but under that guise much was said against British government and Europeans and in favour of Tilak's views. Every effort was made to prosecute the preachers but the reports as taken down by shorthand writers failed to afford sufficient grounds. Eventually steps were taken under the Police Act and a prohibitory notice under section 23, subsection 2, clause (a), was on 5 June served on one R. D. Parmar. This order Parmar treated with contempt, and at a meeting he addressed the next day held it up to ridicule. Later on in the day the preacher was arrested and sentenced to the maximum punishment, viz one month's rigorous imprisonment.

69. The above are some of the means whereby Tilak was brought before the people of Bombay, and his doings and sayings were further spread by the many religious Hindu preachers, who are daily in the habit of reading Purans to the mill-hands in their chals.

70. I am not prepared to say therefore that there was no sympathy for Tilak in Bombay prior to his arrest and trial, but I do not think there was sufficient to have caused the intense excitement amongst the Mahrathas and Banias which showed itself, and the probability is that had Tilak been tried elsewhere, agitation would not have been carried on in Bombay to the extent it was. Some one must have started the idea of closing shops and going on strike for so many days. I do not think the movement was spontaneous. As I have already stated there was not much interval between the arrest of Tilak and his trial in High Court but in that short time, there can be no doubt that emissaries were at work inflaming the minds of the mill-hands and others to riot and in other ways disturb the peace.

71. Every mill has its Brahmin clerks who possess more or less influence amongst the jobbers, while the jobbers are men

to whom the mill-hands look for their future. If a man wants work in a mill he goes to a jobber, who gets him employment and the jobber it is as he knows who gets him dismissed if he offends him. Most mill-hands are in debt, and if they wish to obtain money on credit they know that their jobber will stand security. Every other jobber of any consequence obtains, in this way, a hold over a number of hands and they follow him and consider that their fortunes are mixed up with his. If such a jobber misbehaves and the manager of the mill wishes to dismiss him, he dare not do so as he knows that with the jobber will go a number of hands, and this is a serious matter where there is a limited number of men available. Since the commencement of the plague, the supply of mill-hands has not been equal to the demand, hence every mill manager is anxious to keep his hands on at all risks. Thus the manager is more or less at the mercy of his jobbers, and if the latter are in any way under the thumb of the clerks, they become an excellent channel for the dissemination of sedition amongst the mill-hands.

72. It is not unlikely therefore that the agitation, in whosoever's mind it may have originated, was engineered through the Brahmin clerks in mills.

73. What gained Tilak more sympathy than anything else after the trial began was his address to the jury. In this address which occupied 21 hours, he was allowed the most extraordinary latitude both by the judge and the advocate general and the question of relevancy was never for one moment permitted to interrupt his torrent of words. This address, in reality, was made not so much to the jury as to the gallery, and he seized this opportunity to make what was a vehement political attack on British administration. His remarks were printed and published far and wide, and they were eagerly perused by the educated and explained to the masses, day by day. This style of address was anticipated as Paranjape had adopted the same methods during his address and it was apprehended that it would have a disastrous effect on the minds of the populace. That this apprehension was not mistaken was, I think, borne out by the results.

74. As pointed out, the idea of organising had already been

put in to the minds of the mill-hands by Tilak not long before his imprisonment, and to prove that the seed did not fall on barren soil, I may mention that since Tilak spoke on the subject, an association has been formed styled "The Bombay Mill-hands Defence Association". The object and reasons of this association are clear, and I do not propose to discuss them but what I desire to call attention to is the fact that it is the first step towards organisation on the part of mill-hands.

75. In the recent disturbances the mill-hands were the chief instruments used for disorder. But they had no organisation, no leader, no common object and no weapons other than stones. They broke the windows of mills, it is true, but that was because some of their number stuck to their work and they wanted them to come out. Had all the mills closed down simultaneously, the probability is that the hands would have been at a loss as to what to do. They were aware they were expected to show sympathy for Tilak, but how to do so except by going or trying to go to the High Court, they knew not.

76. If a combined movement against government can ever be effected, then we may expect that there will be organisation, a leader, a common object, and there will be weapons, such as pickaxe, hatchets, crowbars, bludgeons, etc. The idea of the mill-hands arming with such weapons was mooted during the close of the recent trouble. The object will be the destruction of Europeans, government buildings, offices, the railways, the tramways, telegraph lines, etc., looting of shops, European for choice, and possibly the burning of mills belonging to Europeans. The area over which they will operate will be the 23 square miles of Bombay and the numbers engaged will be 50 to 60 thousand able-bodied mill-hands plus such of the population as are inimical to British rule.

77. To deal with such a situation there is the Bombay garrison consisting three companies of Royal Garrison Artillery, half a battalion of British Infantry, one regiment of Native Infantry, supplemented by a force of 1,274 volunteers composed of foot, mounted and artillery, and the police force.

78. The latter force is made up of 85 Europeans armed with revolvers, 2,038 native constables armed with batons and 100 native sowars armed with sabres, and 70 native constables

armed with breech-loading, smooth bore, 476 rifles firing buck-shot.

79. The presumption is that before such a movement could come to a head, the police would for some time have been in possession of information enabling them to judge the gravity of the situation, and that steps would already have been taken to warn the military to be in readiness in the event of the civil power being overawed. It is equally likely that the military authority would have made arrangements to obtain additional troops from outside, acting on experience gained during the late riots. If then the trouble had not spread sufficiently over the rest of India to prevent the military requisitions being complied with, the Bombay military authorities would be prepared for all emergencies.

80. The first steps necessary, however, on the breaking out of disorder, would have to be taken by the police, and it should be their endeavour to act without military assistance until such time as it became clear that without such assistance the revolutionists must gain the upper hand. Is the force at present constituted capable of adequately resisting and, if possible, nipping in the bud such an outbreak? I do not think it is. The difficulties experienced in recent events have shown that.

81. I do not at the same time think it would be possible to strengthen the police in such a manner as to deal with a combined movement which lasted for any considerable time. The wide area and the numbers concerned would preclude that. I am however of opinion that changes in the personnel and numbers might be made, which would at any rate enable the police to hold the elements of disorder at bay until such time as the military were able to concentrate.

82. In my reorganisation proposals, made prior to recent events, I have asked for an addition of 50 Europeans. This would bring the number of European police up to 135. But of them 24 belong to the harbour, the government dockyard, the Prince's and Victoria docks, the motor vehicles department, the public land conveyance licence department and the sanitary police. I am of opinion now that there should not be less than 200 European officers, exclusive of those belonging to the har-

hour, etc., and that amongst them should be included a second deputy commissioner and an assistant to the commissioner.

In the trouble the superintendent, K division, was practically carrying on the duties of an assistant to the commissioner, instead of being engaged in his special work of detection. He could not be spared for that work with the result that it suffered.

The deputy commissioner and I, having to be out of doors most of the time, found it so difficult to carry on the usual office routine that I have to indent on the inspector-general of police for an assistant superintendent.

But in ordinary times also, the deputy is too much tied down to his office, and much useful work might be done by him, if there were a second deputy. The present inspector-general of police, Mr Kennedy, who acted as commissioner of police, Bombay, for six months, came to a similar conclusion.

I find constantly also that I require an officer above the rank of the Bombay superintendent whom I can entrust from time to time with urgent and confidential work in and out of office. I cannot go myself, I cannot ask the deputy to go, and yet it is highly desirable that some one should be immediately interviewed on business of great moment. I have to fall back on the superintendent, K division, not of the requisite status. This often happens.

In the recent trouble the European officers were invaluable, but the paucity of their number threw on each and every one of them an almost intolerable amount of work, and they remained on duty from the beginning of the trouble until the end, without any relaxation, sleeping and feeding when and where they could. On no occasion did any one of them complain, on the contrary they performed their duties most cheerfully and willingly.

83. Another addition I would advocate would be an increase in the mounted branch. I have 100 sowars at my disposal, and they did excellent work in the riots, but they had to be distributed over so wide an area that they were practically lost.

Bombay has no cavalry, with the exception of 53 sabres of the Bombay Light Horse. I am of opinion that the mounted police force should be augmented by at least one squadron of

120 strong and that the total body should be armed with lances and revolvers.

84. The number of armed police available for duty on emergencies is too small. Whenever any trouble occurs I invariably have to ask the inspector-general of police to take over the duties of treasure escorts. But even then there are only 75 men for duty.

I have asked in my reorganisation proposals for additional armed and unarmed men to form a standing reserve. This reserve would be real reserve and should have no duties except those necessitated by emergencies. They should be ready in their lines to be called out at a moment's notice. I have fixed the number at 75 armed and 65 unarmed.

Now, however, I consider that such a reserve should not number less than 200 men all told, and that they should all be armed. When called out for duties their arms need not always be carried but they should possess them.

During the trouble the military mounted guard at 14 posts; this was the maximum number, but each guard consisted of 50 men. Had I had 200 men at my disposal, we could have manned about six posts with 15 men at each post, taking into consideration reliefs.

This would not have sufficed for long, but it would have made a good beginning. But these men are required in ordinary times, in consequences of the manner in which mill-hands have been going out on strike during the last few years. A glance at the annual report will show that during the year 1907 no less than 13,794 mill-hands were involved.

I consider these additions should be carried out forthwith. Every day the mill-hands are beginning to realise their strength, and quite apart from any extraordinary outbreak, any day may witness a large and combined strike.

85. The last point is the recruitment of the native police. The present native force is composed of three-fourths Hindus and one-fourth Mahomedans. Nearly the total number of the Hindus come from Ratnagiri. In any extraordinary outbreak, such as has been suggested, in which it is likely that the mill-hands would take a leading part, it is most desirable that the forces opposed to them should be men of other districts. A

great number of the police have relations amongst the mill-hands, male and female, and though this might be expected to work in favour of the police being able to obtain information regarding their movements, it worked in a contrary direction in the recent troubles, and the opposition the mill-hands met with was not so great as might have been the case had they belonged to different districts, the great majority of the mill-hands belonging to Ratnagiri.

86. The danger of having so many men belonging to one district has not been unnoticed in the past, and efforts were made years ago, by my predecessors in office, to enlist men from other districts and provinces but the attempts failed.

Renewed efforts will again be made to fill up vacancies as they occur with men from other provinces and for this purpose recruiting parties will be sent to the different centres.

(Source Material, II, 256-74)

Bombay Workers' First Political Strike—1908

By D. C. HOME

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

The occasion for this remark was the glorious struggle of the Bombay workers as a protest against the savage sentence passed against Lokmanya Tilak in the same year. Unfortunately this event has not found its rightful place either in our written history or in popular narrations of our fight for independence.

Both the imperialist falsifiers of our history and the bourgeois historians have deliberately suppressed it—and for the same reason, both were mortally afraid of the class-conscious action of the working class.

But the working class has for ever cherished the memory of their first great struggle and their martyrs. However, the real story has never been fully told. Here a bare outline has been attempted.

The judgement in the Tilak Case was delivered at 11 p.m. on 22 July 1908. On that day the elements, as if reflecting the popular mood, were in a fury—wind lashing out in gusts and rain pouring in torrents. But the people of Bombay did not care. Braving the weather, they gathered in their thousands near the High Court, the approaches to which were guarded

by mounted police who made repeated charges against the surging mass.

That Tilak would be sentenced was known to all by 7 p.m. The people who had gathered at the court, like the inhabitants of the city as a whole, were gripped by a feeling of sullen resentment. But they had no idea what to do and so, when Tilak was sentenced and whisked away from the court, they dispersed in an angry mood.

The plan of action came from the mill-hands—they struck work.

On 23 July, the first day, there was a complete hartal, no untoward incident breaking the peace of the city. Yet the atmosphere was strangely surcharged. Everyone felt the breath of something ominous approaching. 24 July revealed what that ominous thing was—the unsheathed sword of the British enslavers.

The workers were undaunted. They mobilised in their thousands in open defiance of the raj. Fighting broke out in the streets.

The first clash took place on the morning of 24 July at Kalachowky. Since the morning the workers who were on strike began to gather at various places in the working-class areas. In the Chinchpokhli-Kalachowky area too they gathered in large numbers. Presently, their strength swelled to about five thousand and forming themselves into a procession, they moved towards Ghorapdeo to join a similar gathering there. Their slogans reverberated all over the areas, sending a rebellious message to the people.

Having never before experienced any organised defiance from the workers on any political issue, the authorities did not take serious notice of it. They were sure that a host of 'native' workers would scamper like flies the moment the white-skinned representatives of the law appeared on the horizon, no matter in what strength. So the Kalachowky demonstrators were met by Superintendent Meyers, accompanied by two European inspectors at the Chinchpokli Road and Kalachowky Road junction. The first thing the officers did the moment they were within earshot was peremptorily to ask the workers to disperse.

Little did the police officers know that they were confronted

with a mass of workers who had by then matured enough to know their own strength and the dignity of their class. The workers, to the utter amazement of the police, not only ignored the lofty order, but began to boo and jeer. This was too much for the haughty officers. They pulled out their revolvers and began to fire right and left.

The workers, infuriated by this wanton act, rushed at the officers but, being unarmed, suffered casualties. The experience opened their eyes. They at once thought out a plan. Dividing themselves into two groups, each numbering over three thousand, they took positions in two streets from where they hurled volleys of stones at the police so that the officers did not know which group to tackle.

More workers arrived and their number now swelled to over twelve thousand. The officers were now frightened. They had already lost that overbearing self-confidence. So they took to their heels and got shelter at the Parel Fire Brigade building which stood nearby.

One of the officers, Inspector Finan, while giving evidence during the inquest on the bodies of those who died in the Chinchpokli clash, held before G. F. Chalk, the coroner, gave the following description:

“At about quarter to seven they (Superintendent Meyers and Inspector Finan) arrived at the junction of the Kalachowky and Chinchpokli roads, where they met S.I. Holmes, who informed them that a large crowd of mill-hands from Bombay Cotton Mills and the Western Cotton Mills had assembled in Kalachowky Road, and were throwing stones at the glass panes of the weaving sheds of the Bombay Cotton and the Western India Mills. After this, the men proceeded down Chinchpokli Road and they assembled in front of Sassoon Mills. From where the witness and the other two officers were standing they could see the crowd, who were shouting. Superintendent Meyers and the witness proceeded towards the crowd, and on arriving ten or fifteen paces from them Mr Meyers called on them to disperse. But they refused to do so, commencing jeering, and threw one or two stones at them. As the crowd numbered over 5,000 and matters were becoming worse, the witness beckoned to Mr Holmes, who was about one hundred yards away, to

come to their assistance. On Mr Holmes' arrival they charged the crowd to disperse them by force and drove them as far as the junction of Albert and Chinchpokli Roads. Then the crowd separated into two parties, leaving Chinchpokli Road quite clear, one party assembling on Albert Road and the other on the piece of open ground opposite the road. Volleys of stones were thrown at the witness and his two companions. Mr Meyers thereupon again ordered the crowd to disperse and to desist from throwing stones. But the stone-throwing continued. The witness was hit several times. Mr Meyers was also struck ... subsequently Mr Meyers fired his revolver at the crowd, after which the witness as well as Mr Holmes also fired ... After they fired the crowd continued to stone them until they got to the Fire Brigade building ..." (*The Times of India*, 25 July, 1908).

While the workers, who were chasing the officers, attacked the building, the military appeared on the scene. This was the workers' first encounter with the army. For a while they stood indecisive. Then, having given a few minutes' fight and suffered some casualties, they retreated to Sussex Road, where another surging mass of workers joined them.

Volleys of stones began to be hurled at the police and military who retaliated with rifle and pistol shots. It was a fullscale battle. The workers demonstrated unexpected valour and resolution. But armed as they were with stones only, they could not hold out for long against bullets.

Many workers were killed and injured. Among those killed were Ganpat Govind and a boy (whose name has never been found out) who led the Kalachowky fight.

Describing the role of Ganpat and the other boy, Finan said, in the course of his evidence before the coroner, that when the first stage of the skirmish was in progress he, Finan, "particularly saw the deceased (Ganpat) standing near the police chowki and encouraging the crowd to attack the police... The witness saw two or three fall after the firing. The second deceased (the unidentified boy) was in the mob. He was one of the ring-leaders and was urging the crowd to attack." (*Ibid.*)

Incidentally, Finan also specified in his evidence before the

coroner the fact that no Indian member of the constabulary was employed at the Chinchpokli clash.

The incident known as the Chinchpokli incident was over by 11 a.m.

For a while the area became quiet.

But forces were mobilising elsewhere. At Colaba, where two mills had started work, a tense situation developed when the European manager came on his usual round. The workers, who looked sullen and defiant, seemed to have got infuriated on seeing him. They began to jeer at him.

A white man, whether in official service or in civilian occupation, invariably considered himself the master of the 'natives'. He was not wont to tolerate invectives from his coloured slaves. The ire of the manager was naturally aroused, which made the workers all the more furious. They adopted an aggressive attitude and threatened to deal with the manager effectively. Losing no time in idle arguments, he rushed to his office and phoned to the police, who soon arrived.

Both sides arrayed themselves for a battle, the police with rifles and the workers with whatever they could lay their hands on. But before skirmishes broke out, the owners decided to close the mills and the workers were allowed to go out, which they did triumphantly, shouting "Tilak Maharaj-ki-jai", which was the battle cry of the time.

Similar incidents took place in other areas, notably Mahim where an open clash occurred between the workers and the military.

A woollen mill at Mahim, belonging to a European firm, was working. When the workers heard of the Chinchpokli incident they refused to work. The military was summoned. Other workers hearing of this rushed to the scene. A clash broke out and the military fired. The European manager was one of the casualties. The mill was later closed.

Life in Bombay was now paralysed. Business and traffic came to a standstill, an atmosphere of smouldering hostility pervading everywhere. The dock area too was absolutely deserted—workers, coolies and cartmen being on strike.

At 1 p.m. an attempt to open a textile mill on Delisle Road was foiled by the workers.

At 2 p.m. came the next major incident. A group of Europeans was seen going towards the Currey Road Station. The workers who had been incensed by the incidents of the earlier part of the day surrounded the station where the Europeans had taken shelter.

The police and the military arrived. The railway authorities also rushed reinforcements from Victoria Terminus. Then followed a long-drawn fight, in which the workers began to show improved technique. Instead of making frontal attacks, they took positions behind structures and trees and hurled stones smashing the windows and other properties of the station building.

More workers arrived, and as their numbers swelled they made more open attacks. Volleys were fired from the rifles of the military. Stones were hardly any match for bullets. The workers suffered a fresh toll of casualties in dead and injured.

Among those whose dead bodies were subsequently picked up from there and produced before the city coroner were: Madhu Raghunath, aged 52; Sitaram Savji, aged 22; Dondru Sonu, aged 25; Jila Babu, aged 25; and an unidentified boy of about 16.

The workers retreated along the line and stopped the Poona Mail which, as it turned out, was carrying reinforcements who opened fire on the workers.

The next two days passed in comparative peace, though not a single mill was working and the working-class areas were under the charge of the military.

On the 24th evening Mr Gell, the commissioner of police, called an urgent meeting of prominent millowners and made a strong plea to them to come out openly against the strike. Subsequently, the millowners called a meeting of their association. Mr Fazalbhoi Visram, the president of the association, said in his speech that "It was in the interests of the industry to dissuade the men from going on a general strike. He pointed out that it was their duty not to embarrass the government in any way and it was incumbent upon them to exert their influence to prevail upon the men to respect law and authority and resume work." (Ibid.)

However, the situation was not brought under control. The Anglo-Indian press screamed for action:

"... Yesterday, we were informed that the share bazar, the freight market, and the cloth bazars were closed to business. What is the meaning of this procedure? Connected with these bodies are several prominent men who pose as the leaders of the Hindu community, and on other occasions make much parade of their loyalty to the British government. Some of them hold the offices of justice of peace, others have received rewards from His Majesty the King. What do they mean by their closing their business or suffering organisations with which they are prominently connected to close operation without a word of protest? ... We earnestly appeal to the government to make these discreditable circumstances a matter for the fullest investigations, so that we may be left in no doubt as to who is for us and is against us." (Ibid.)

On Monday, *The Times of India* came out with the following warning:

"... It is essential to know that this tranquillity lies almost upon the surface. None of the mills were at work on Saturday or Sunday. The temper of the mill operatives is said to be extremely sullen. Whilst these conditions last, the material for further trouble invariably brings in its trail, exist." (sic!)

That the Europeans' fear was not unfounded became clear the same day. New forces entered the fray—the poorer section of the business community.

The scene of this most unprecedented action was Sheikh Memon Street, then the hub of the city's business activities, on which were situated three of the most important cloth markets. The action there was preceded by the circulation of a handbill in Gujarati which carried Tilak's photo and the slogan, "Tilak Maharaj-ki-jai" inscribed on it. It described Tilak as the "heart and soul of the nation and since the soul was taken away how could the body, i.e. the nation, live". Having reminded the public that it was Tilak who, by instituting the swadeshi movement, opened the doors of prosperity before India, the handbill defended the workers' stand and ended by saying, "Success to Swadeshi!"

Within a short time thousands flocked to Sheikh Memon

Street. By 11 a.m. the situation grew tense and the police arrived on the scene. Presently it became apparent that the police would not be able to handle the situation. The military was summoned, but the demonstrators were not frightened.

Describing the clash at the Sheikh Memon Street, particularly that at the Mulji Jetha Market on the same road, *The Times of India* reporter wrote:

“The military and police were stoned or otherwise assaulted with a persistence which has not been seen during the present trouble even in the heart of the mill districts. Showers of stones were rained upon the unfortunate representatives of law and order... When soldiers knelt down to shoot hails of stones were thrown on them...”

Skirmishes took place, but this time the demonstrators did not easily disperse. On the contrary they fought with greater determination, applying tactics which had proved effective during the clashes on 23 July. They divided themselves into a number of batches, filling lanes, bylanes and streets. The most determined clash took place at about 3 in the afternoon, in spite of the heavy casualties sustained by the masses.

By this time Keshavlal Kanji, a young Gujarati businessman of 25 who was the main leader of that day's action, was killed, shot right through the heart. Clad in black, in typical Bania dress, this sturdy young man had showed the same valour, sense of strategy and leadership throughout the day's uprising as did others in the working-class areas. Attempts have been made to calumniate his memory by spreading the slander that he had used a small boy as a shield. This is done in order to whitewash what was one of the most inhuman examples of cruelty the military had perpetrated—shooting an unarmed man right through the chest at point blank range.

That evening the workers in the Parel area again clashed with the military.

The business areas too were brought under military control.

An entirely new section entered the field the next day—the domestic servants in the Girgaum area. These were poor peasants from Ratnagiri side who had migrated to Bombay to eke out a living. In those days, as today, they were concentrated in the Girgaum area which was the scene of clashes. Having

collected stones on the roofs of various buildings, in rooms and in lanes and bylanes, they launched a whole-day attack against the police and the military, inflicting injuries on the latter. A city magistrate was badly battered here.

The fight was gallant all through, but not such as could give the people any advantageous gains. The armed might of the foreign government finally overpowered them too, a large number having been put under arrest.

One of the casualties was a young man, Babu Naroba, aged 25. He was killed by a bullet.

On that day the workers too gave their final battle. It took place at Sewri, from where a huge procession began marching towards Dadar on being informed that a mill had started work there. However, the military and the police forced them to retreat.

This, in outline, was the heroic anti-imperialist political action which Lenin acclaimed.

(New Age, Political Monthly, III-6, June 1953, pp. 47-54)

Index

- Affiliated unions, 87, 89, 92
 Afghanistan (also Afghans), xvi, xxviii, lxvii
 Africa, xii, 25
 Agarwalla, Hardevdas, lxxx, 108, 158, 162
 Agarwalla, Ramjash, xxvii, lxxix, lxxx, lxxxi, lxxxii, 107, 108, 116, 124, 126, 128, 158, 165, 167, 175, 179, 185
 Agricultural interest, 54
 Agricultural labour, 19
 Ahmedabad, xliv, lxxxiv-lxxxvii, 198
 Ahmednagar, 193
 Akali peasants, 105
 Ali Brothers, 110, 150, 168
 All India Home Rule League, xii
 All India organisation, need for, 27, 28
 All India Trade Union Congress Constitution, 90-100
 Amritsar, xxii, lxvii
 Amsterdam, lxxxviii, 106, 170
 Amsterdam Federation, 6
 Anant Ram, 154
 Andrews, C. F., lxxvii, 4, 78
 Anglo-Indians, xi, xv, liii, 17, 33, 122, 156, 219
 Anglo-Russian, 213
 Anushilan, xlv
 Arbitration (tor), xxiv, lxxxv, lxxxvi, 70, 71, 74
 Artisans, 136, 180
 Aryapracharak, Swami Lal Muni, 58
Arunodaya, 205
 Arzoo, M. R., 45
 Asansol, lv
 Asia(-n), xi, li, 25, 26, 52.
 Assam, 78, 79, 164
 Ataturk, Kemal, xvi
 Atlantic Charter, xvii
 Ayerst, Lt., xlv
Bande Mataram, xlv, 108
 Banker, S. G., 10
 Bankim Chandra, li
 Baptista, Joseph (also Kaka), xxvii, xxviii, lxx, lxxvi, lxxix, 4, 5, 7-9, 11, 22, 23, 44, 50, 53, 58, 63-66, 70, 71, 75, 77, 87, 107, 109, 110, 154, 156, 164-168, 175, 179, 180
 Baroda, xli, xliv
 Bela Kun, xv, 34
 Belgaum, 194
 Bengal (also Bengali), xxiii, xxvi, xlv, li, liii, lviii, lxi, lxiv, lxvi, lxxxi, lxxxii, 5, 7, 110, 115, 120, 144, 160, 164, 168, 169, 170, 172, 179, 183
 Bengal government, 113
 Besant, Mrs Annie, xii, xxiii, xxiv, lxix, lxxv, 4, 9, 41
 Bhagwat, lxii
 Bhai, Dr Gannu, 127
 Bhandare, Eknath Ganesh, liv
 Bharucha, B. F., 10
 Bhattacharya, Jogesh Chandra, 120
 Bihar, xxvii, lxxxi, lxxxii, 5, 7, 52, 77, 120, 156, 168, 172, 183
 Bolshevik (ism), x, xv-xvii, xxvii, xlvi, lxvii, lxxxii, 12, 33, 122, 148, 173, 181, 183
 Party, 106
Bombay Chronicle, lx, lxxiv, lxxv, lxxxix, 47, 160-66, 168, 172, 174, 178
 Bombay Mill-Hands Defence Association, lxii, 208
 Bombay mill strike of 1919, 3
 Bose, Subhas Chandra, lxxxiii, lxxxvii
 Bose, S. K., 127
 Bourgeoisie, xvii, xx, xxviii, xlii, xliii, li, lii, liv, lviii, lxi, lxiii, lxvi, lxxii, lxxv, lxxix, lxxx, 33

- Boycott, xxviii, xliii, li, liii, lviii, lxvi, 12, 14, 15, 104, 106, 143, 149, 181
- Brelvi, Syed Abdullah, lxxv, 4, 10
- British Administration, 40, 207
anti-, xlviii, 103
Book of Labour, 68
Bureau of Red Trade Union International, 111, 170, 171
capital (ists), lviii, 25, 31
colonies, xxxi, 56
Commonwealth, 39
empire, xi, 38, 118
government, 20, 206, 219
imperialism(ists), xii, 152
labour, xxviii, 6, 37, 149, 181
Labour, Conference of, 6, 7
Labour Party, xvii, lxvii, 17, 38, 40
publications, 33
rule (-ers), xxii, 23, 104, 181, 208
ruling class, lxiii, 105
Trades Union Congress, xvii, xxix, lxvii, lxxviii, lxxxvii, lxxxix, 7, 43, 77, 156, 168, 171, 182
- Bureaucrats (-cy), xxviii, lv, lxxxix, 14, 27, 38, 59, 60, 115, 142, 149, 171
- Burke, Edmond, xiii
- Burma, liv
- Calcutta, xiv, xviii, xxiii, xxiv, xxxviii, xxxix, xliii, li, liv, lix, lxiii, 34, 51, 104, 108, 116, 165, 175, 176, 187
- Capital, xviii, xx, xxx, xl, 12, 29, 30, 67, 68, 113, 114, 126, 141, 142, 146, 173, 174, 180
- Capitalism, x, xv, xix, xxvi, xxvii, xliii, lxvi, lxxxiii, lxxxv, 25, 33
western, 136, 170
- Capitalists, lxxxv, 12, 15, 29-31, 33-36, 57, 59, 65, 67, 72, 79, 112-14, 117-19, 121-23, 138, 141, 152, 169, 170, 171, 173, 180, 184
- Capitalist autocracy, 27
- European, 29
white, 57
- Carlyle, xiii
- Cawnpore, 120, 172, 175, 183
- Central Labour Board, 182
- Central Labour Federation, 6, 87, 88, 89
- Centralisation of labour activity, 6
- Chapekar Brothers, xlv, 1
- Chakravarty, Babu Shyamsunder, 108, 110, 167
- Chand, Sahib, 48
- Chaudhury, K. C., xxvi, 115, 169, 182
- Chettiar, V. Chakarai, lxxviii, 7
- Chhotani, Mian Muhammed Haji Jan Muhammed, lxxiii, 65
- China (-ese), xi, xii, xviii, 24, 25, 124, 132
- Chittagong, xlv, 120, 165, 172
- Christians, xlviii, 12, 28, 38, 152
- Churchill, Winston, xi, xv, xvii, xxviii, 33, 149
- Civil Service Regulations, 53
- Class Supremacy, 109, 167
- Colliery Owners' Association, 158, 166
Owners' Federation, 166
Owners (also proprietors), xvii, 108, 121-23, 124, 126, 127, 129, 157, 158, 167, 168, 173, 175, 176, 177, 179, 183-85, 187
- Collective bargaining, 12
- Commission of Enquiry, xxxv, xxxvi, 3, 4, 75
- Commissioner of Labour, 113
- Communism, xiii
- Communist(s), xiv, xxi, xxviii, lxiv
- Communist Party, x
- Constitution of Labour Federation, Bombay, 87-89
- Cost of living, 68, 74
- Counterrevolution, 106
- Curzon, Lord, xxxix, 114

- Dacca, li
 Dadabhai, 152
Daily Herald, xv, 33, 37, 63, 104, 178
 Daleswar, 175
 Dalvi, M. D., lxxv, 58, 108, 154, 165
 Darsanananda, Swami, 108, 120, 127, 167, 173
 Das, Babu Khalil, 120
 Das, C. R., xxxviii, lxxxii, lxxxiii, lxxxvii, 142, 162, 168, 174
 Daud, Mohammed, xxxvii, 116
 Delegates, fraternal, 7, 38, 40, 77
 Delhi, 162
 Depressed classes, 20
 Desai, Vaikunt Hari, 59
 Devi, Smt Savitri, 108, 172, 174
 Dhanbad, 166
 Dhingra, lx
 Dictatorship, proletarian, 32
Dnan Prakash, liii
 Dufferin, Lord, 151
 Dwarkadas, Jamnadas, 10, 62, 65
- Economic bondage, 25
 liberty, 42
 structure, 138
 uplift, 59
 Egypt, xi, lxxvii
Eka movement, 104
 Election of President (at the first AITUC session), 19-22
 Employers' Association (also organisation), xxxiv, xxxv, 149, 150
 English colliery owners, 165
 English workers, 41
 Europe (-an), xi, xiv, xv, xvi, li, liii, lvi, lxi, lxxii, lxxix, lxxxi, lxxxvi, lxxxix, 20, 25, 26, 29, 29, 32-34, 49, 50, 106, 107, 112, 120-23, 137, 138, 166, 168, 170, 172, 176, 179, 182, 184, 186, 192, 195, 198, 200-4, 206, 208-10, 19
- European capitalists, xxi, xxvi
 institutions, 153
 labour, xiv, 32
 revolution, 61
 worker, xiv
 Excess profit, 18
 Exploiters (-tion), xi, xxxii, xli, lviii, 78, 79, 114, 132, 170
 Exploiting capitalists, 114
 Exploited classes, 12
 masses, xi, xii
 Export of foodstuffs, ii, 50, 51, 68, 116, 150, 175, 181
 subcommittee 50
- Fabian, 148
 Fabian socialism, xxvii, 181
 Factory Act, 79
 Factory Commission, lxx
 Factory inspector, 50
 Factory labour, 19
 Federation of Labour in India, 11
 Foreign capital (ist), 26, 169, 182
 Forst, xlvi
 France (also French), xvi, xvii, 34, 138
 French Revolutionary Convention, 134
 Freedom movement, 103
 Fiji, xxxii, xliv, lxix, lxxxvi, 52, 55, 56, 69, 175, 176, 186
- Gadgil, G. K., lxxvii, lxxviii, lxxx, 108, 153, 154, 158
 Gandhi, Mahatma, xvi, xxiii, xxv, xxvi, xxxviii, l, lxxv, lxxvii, lxix, lxxv, lxxvi, lxxxii-lxxxvii, 41, 103, 105, 110, 115, 116, 131, 134, 137, 152, 153, 162, 168, 169, 181
 Gandhism, 33
 Garibaldi, xiii
 General Union of Textile Workers, 182
 Geneva, xxxv, 6, 54, 77, 117, 132, 156, 175, 176, 186

- Geneva Conference, 141
 German (-y), xii, xiii, l, lxxv, lxxiii,
 34, 145, 146
 Gilchrist, 108
 Ginwala, F. J., lxxv, lxxxv, 50, 58
 Gokhale, 58
 Gokhale, Mrs Avintikabai, lxxiv,
 lxxv, 10, 56
 Governor, 53, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71,
 141, 151, 202, 205
 deputation to, 66-71
 Governor's reply to address, 71
 to 74
 Govindji, Mavji, lxxviii, lxxiii, lxxvi,
 10, 44, 46, 52, 65
 Grand National Consolidated
 Trade Union, 135
 Greece, xvii
 Greenfield, General, 195
 Guiana, xlv
 Gujarat (-hi), xlv, lxxvi, 185, 219,
 220
 Gupta, Jagannath, lxxx, 158
 Gwalior, lxxviii
- Haldar, J. N., 55
 Hartal, 104, 106
 Hindi, 108-10, 114-17, 119, 120,
 126, 167, 168
 Hindu-Muslim unity, 120
 Hindus, l, li, lxxviii, lxxix, lxxxiii,
 lxxxv, 129, 130, 204, 206, 211,
 219
Hind Swarajya, 205
 Holland, Sir Thomas, 13, 147
 Home, D. C., lix, 213
 on Bombay workers' first politi-
 cal strike—1908, 213-21
 Home rule, l, lxxvii, lxxxix
 Home Rule League, xii, lxxvi, 41
 Horniman, B. G., lxxiv, lxxxix, 59,
 60-62, 69, 77, 156, 171
 Hotland, 55
 Hungary, xvi, 34
- 25, 33, 106, 171, 220, 213
 anti-, xxxviii, xl, xlvii, xlvi, liii,
 lxi-lxvi, lxxii, lxxxii, xc, 103, 106,
 221
 Independent Labour Party, xvii,
 lxxvii, 41, 82
 Indian capital (-ists), 29-31, 112,
 182
Daily News, 104
 industries, 29, 30
 labour, 7, 21, 22, 29-32, 37, 41,
 42, 49-52, 54, 55, 66, 68, 71,
 76, 90, 155
 Mining Association, lxxxii, 124,
 127, 165, 173, 184, 185
 Mining Federation, lxxxii, 127,
 165, 175, 177, 178, 184, 185
 National Congress, xxii-xxv,
 xxviii, xxxii, xxxvii-xxxix, xlii,
 xliii, l, liv, lviii, lxxii, lxxv, lxxvii,
 lxxix, lxxxii, lxxxiv, lxxxix, 20,
 21, 45, 79, 103, 105, 107, 148
 revolutionaries, xii, lxxxii
 worker, 5, 41, 55, 56, 63, 168
 Workers' Welfare League of Lon-
 don, 6, 7, 37, 63, 168, 171, 176,
 182, 186
- Indonesia, xi
 Indore, xlv
Induprakash, lxix
 Industrial control, 41
 development, 71
 disputes, 72, 73, 74
 Industrialism, 139
 Industries, 30, 145
 Inflation of price, 68
 Influenza Committee, 61
 International Federation of Trade
 Unions (IFTU), lxxxviii, lxxxix, 6,
 76
 International Labour Conference,
 xxvii, lxxiii, 3, 4, 6, 31, 49, 50,
 54, 68, 77, 156, 176
 Labour Office, 3
 Labour Organisation, (IL
 xxxiv-xxxvi, xxxix, 117, 175,
 Ireland, xi, 37, 114, 175, 176
- Imperialism (-ist, istic), x, xi, xiii,
 xv-xvii, xix, xl, li, lxiii, lxxv,

- Irish, lxxvii, lxxxix, 114
 Labour Party, 182
 Rebellion, xi, xii
 Trade Union Congress, xvii, 37, 42
 Women Workers' Union, 37
 Italian liberation movement, xii
 Iyer, E. L., 7, 47, 108, 112, 169, 174, 182
- Jackson, ix
 Jain, Chottalal, lxxx, 158
 Jalalabad, xvi
 Jallianwala Bagh, xxii, xxiii, 55
 Jamshepur, xxii, xxix, xxx, lxxxi, 48, 163, 165, 175, 176, 187
 Labour Association, 163
 strike, 48
 Japan, 27, 29, 146
 Javeri, Lalubhai D., lxxii, 10
 Jhabwalla, lxx
- Jharia, xxv-xxviii, xxxii, xxxix, li, lxvi, lxxi, lxxii, lxxviii-lxxxiii, lxxxv, lxxxvii, lxxxix, 8, 77, 103, 106, 107, 108, 128, 134, 139, 141, 156-63, 165, 166, 170, 176, 179, 182, 187
 Jinnah, M. A., lxix, lxxiv, 9
 Jinnah, Mrs, lxxiv, lxxv, 9, 60, 62
 Jivan, Madhabji, 108
 Joshi, Miss, lxxiv, 10
 Joshi, N. M., xxxv, xxxvi, lxxv, 4, 6, 20, 49, 54, 75, 77, 87, 156, 174
 Joshi, Miss Nagutai, lxxiv
 Johnson, W., 14
Justice, xv, 33
- Kal*, lx, 191
 Kamalakar, lxix
 Kanauji, Mohindra Chandra, 162, 185
 Kanhere, Anand, lx
 Karachi, 51
 Kaushik, Prof, 108, 110
 Kautsky, xiii
 Kelkar, N. C., xxxviii, lxxiv, 58
- Kenya, xlv
Kesari, xlvii, xlvi, xlix, liv, lv, lviii, lxiii
 Khadikar, K. P., xlix, l, lxiii
 Khalil Das, Baba 172
 Khan, Jalil, 52, 55, 108
 Khan, M. A., xxxi, 51
 Khan, R. M., lx
 Khaparde, 194
 Kharis, lxix
 Khatri, Ahmed Haji Siddick, 10
 Kher, lxxv
 Khilafat, lxxiii, 126
 Khora, Karamshi, 108
 Kisan associations, 161
 Knight, Holford, 7
 Kolhapur, xlv
 Kolis, xlviii
 Kossuth, xiii
 Kulaks, 106
 Kurups, l
- Labour Association, 175
 Board, 164
 Bureau, 73
 conditions, 124
 Conference, xxxv, lxxvii, lxxviii, 148
 Congress, 21
 demands of, 124
 Federation, 164
 forced, 31
 grievances of, 51
 in India, 114, 116
 leaders, 21, 108, 166
 member, 55
 ministry, 143, 147, 177, 187
 movement, xv, 7, 20, 42 118, 132, 138, 141, 170, 180
 organs, 33
 organisation, xxxiv, lxxxvii, 53, 90, 141, 161
 Party, xvii, lxxvii, lxxxviii, 38, 40
 population, 131
 problems, 180
 publications, 33
 rights, 17
 statutes of, 12

- union, 13, 37, 42, 54, 90, 92, 97, 99, 175
 welfare, 35, 118
 yearbook, 53
 Labourers, lxviii, lxxxvi, 12, 18, 21, 32, 52, 57, 119, 128, 173
 Lahore, xxxi, xliii, 34, 59
 Lal, Jagatnarayan, 169
 Lal, Narain, 115
 Lal, Pandit Murari, 120
 Lall, Chaman (also Dewan Chamanlal), xxvi, xxxv-xxxviii, lxx, lxxvii, lxxviii, lxxx, 6, 10, 11, 16, 21, 37, 54, 58, 61, 64, 75-77, 79, 87, 107, 108, 110, 112, 114, 154-56, 160, 165, 168, 182
 Lall, Mrs Chaman, 10
 Land nationalisation, 41
 Lansbury, George, 37
 Law of demand and supply, 12
 Laxmibai, lx
 League of Nations, xxxiv, 13, 31, 54, 141, 142, 186
 Lenin, xiii, xv, xlvii, lxii, lxiii, lxxxii, 34, 106, 213, 221
 Lloyd, Sir George Ambrose, 66
 Lloyd George, xvii, 14, 15, 126, 148, 157
 Lock-out, 13, 103
 Lokhande, xli
 London, xv, xlv, lx, lxxxix, 33, 170, 171, 178, 182
 Macaulay, xl, 152
 Madras, xxix, xxxi, xliii, xlv, liii, lxi, lxiv, 6, 7, 19, 34, 41, 48, 59, 104, 112, 113, 164, 165, 169, 175, 176, 179, 182, 187
 Central Labour Board, 113
 Electric Employees' Labour Union, lxxv, 117
 Maharashtra, xliii, xlvi
Mahratta, xlvii, 194, 206
 Malabar, 105
 Mallik, Haji Mohamed, 162
 Manchester, li, 25, 26, 29, 120, 146
 Maniar, M. B., 56
 Maniktola Bomb Case, lviii
 Mao Tse-tung, xlv
 Marathi, xxxiii, xlvii, xlix, lxviii, lxi, lxx, lxxiii, lxxvi, lxxviii, 193, 198, 205
 Marxism, lxiii
 Marxist-Leninist, xlv
 Masses, xii, xvii, xxviii, xlvii, xlix-li, lviii, lxi, lxiv, lxv, lxxix, 19, 65, 131, 137, 181, 192, 194, 220
 Mass action, xlv
 movement, xxii, xxxv, xxxvi, lxix, 3
 struggle, xxiii, xxv, xlvii, 213
 Master and Servant Act, 135
 Mauritius, xlv
 Mazzini, xiii
 Mehta, Narasimha, 45
 Mehta, Pheroza Shah, lviii
 Mill owners, xliii, lxxxvi, 70, 218
 Owners' Association, lvii, 57, 218
 workers, 70
 Miller, J. B., xxxi, 7, 10, 21, 49, 51, 59, 114, 127, 169, 177, 182, 185
 Miners' Federation, 114, 158, 168, 182
 Minimum wages, 68
 Misra, Ram Kumar, 56
 Mitter, 174
 Montagu, 6, 147, 163
 Montagu-Chelmsford Reform (also scheme), xxii, lxvii, lxxv, 104
 Moplah rebellion, 105
 Morley-Minto Scheme, lxiii, lxv
Morning Post, xv, lxxxvi, 33
 Morris, lvii
 Moscow, xiii, lxxxviii, 106
 Moslems (also Muhamedans), li, lxviii, 17, 137, 151, 204, 211
 Mucadum, R. A., 108, 185
 Mudaliar, Kalyanasundaram, 7
 Muller, Max, lix
 Murarilal, 172, 183
 Muzumdar, Charu, xlv
 Muzaffarpur, lviii

- Nagpur, xxiii-xxv, xxxix, lxxvii, 103
 Naicker, Natesa, 58
 Naidu, Sarojini, lxxiv
 Nana Sahib, lx
 Nanavati, Chhaganlal, lxxv, 10, 61
 Nankana Sikh peasants, 105
 Narain Singh, Lala, 108, 109
 Naranji, Lalji, 10
 Nariman, K. F., lxxv, 10
 National leadership, 103
 National-revolutionary (movement), lxiv, lxvi, lxxii
 Nationalisation, 145, 150
 of mines, 116
 of railways, 116
 Nationalism, xlii, 21, 29
 Naxalites, xlv
 Negotiation committees, 58
 Nehru, Jawaharlal, lxxii, lxxxvii, 162, 168
 Motilal, xxxviii, lxxii, lxxvi, 9, 162, 168
 Nepal, xlix, 1
New Age, lix, 221
 New Railway Union, 51
 New Zealand, 55
 Nimbkar, R. S., lxix, lxxvii, 58
 Noncooperators, 79
 Noske, xiii
 North Western Railway, strike of 1920, 3

 Obsolete laws, 7
 Oppressive system, 12
 Organisation (TU), 5, 35, 79, 87
 of Labour, 68, 72
 of workers, 3, 6
 Organised capital, xviii, 24, 25
 effort, 3
 industry, xviii, 24
 labour, xviii, xix, 12, 24, 25, 45
 worker, 4
 Oudh, 105
 Owen, Robert, 135

 Padamsey, Lalji, 51
 Pal, Bepinchandra, xxiii, liii, liv, lviii
 Pandit, 45
 Paranjape, 207
 Parekh, Seth Chhaganlal K., 109, 162
 Patel, Sardar, lxxv
 Patel, Vithalbhai J., lxxii, 10
 Pattinson, J. H., lxxx-lxxxii, 108, 122, 124, 126, 173, 174, 182, 183
 Patwardhan, lxix
 Pawar, V. M., lxix, lxx, lxxvii, lxxviii, 10, 11, 16, 51, 58, 64, 70, 75, 154
 Peace treaty, 6
 Peasants (-ry), xi, xxii, xxviii, lx, xlvi, 1, li, liii, lxi, lxv, lxvi, lxxxiii, lxxxvi, 103, 136, 162, 180
 Persia, xi
 Peru, 132
 Pillai, Chidambaram, liii
 Pitambar, J. P. Keshavji, 108, 185
 Plantation coolies, 19
 Planters' Association, 57
 Poona, xli, xlv, xlix, lii, liii, lxxxv, 191, 193, 201, 202, 218
 Political freedom, 41
 liberty, 41, 42
 life, 19, 24
 movement, 19
 power, 12
 Praggi, Hansraj, lxxix
 Prasad, Rajendra, lxxxii, 168
 Pratap, Raja Mahendra, xiii
 Premier (British) (also Prime Minister), 15, 27
 Presidential speeches, 23-36, 64-65, 140-153
 Prince of Wales, xxxii, lxxi, lxxx, lxxxiii
 Private capital, 27
 ownership, 137, 180
 Profit sharing, 41
 Proletariat (-nism), xiv, xlvi, lxiii, 170, 213

- Provincial committees, 90, 92, 95, 97
- Punjab, xxii, xxiii, xxxi, liii, lxi, lxiv, lxx, 49, 53, 105, 120, 164, 169
- Rai, Lala Lajpat, xix, xv, xvii, xxii, xxiii, xxv, xxvii, xxxvi, liii, liv, lviii, lxvi, lxix, lxx, lxxii, lxxix, xc, 4, 6, 9, 19-22, 40, 54, 65, 77, 140, 155, 156, 161, 162, 179
qualities of, 19 to 21
- Railway strike in England, 42
- Ram, Bhakat, 127
- Ram, Dr Daulat, lxxx, 108, 157, 158
- Ram P. Vinayak, 162
- Rand, xlv, xlvi, xlix, lviii, lxiii
- Raneegunj, 108, 121, 173
- Ratnagiri, 211, 212, 220
- Reading, Lord, 151, 181
- Reception Committee (of the first session), 4, 9, 10, 66, 108
- Red International of Labour Unions (RILU), lxxxviii, lxxxix, 106, 168
- Reforms Act of 1885, 149
- Resolutions (of AITUC), 37-40, 44-63, 65, 75-77, 111-27, 155, 172-76
- Revolution, Czech, xi
French, xiii
German, xi, xii
Hungarian, xi, xiii
Russian (also October), x, xi, xiii, xxi, xlvi, lxi, lxvi
Turkish, xvi
world, x
Yugoslav, xi
- Revolution (-ary), xiii, xxii, xlvi, l, li, lxiv, lxv
- Revolutionary masses, xlvi
movement, x
nationalism, xlvi, lxv
terrorists, xlix, lviii
uprisings, liv, 103
- Right of workers, 4
- Rome, 145
- Russia (also Soviet Union), x, xi, xv-xvii, xxviii, xlvi, l, lii, lxv, lxxxii, 32, 33, 34, 106, 122, 149, 175, 176, 186
- Sahay, Pandit Bajrang, 120
- Saklatvala, Shapurji, lxxxix, 37, 63, 77, 156, 171
- Samaldas, Lalubhai, lxxii, lxxiii, lxxix, 10
- Sandesh, lxxviii
- Sathaye, V. J., 58
- Savarkar Brothers, xlv
- Savarkar, G., xlvi, lxxxv
- Savitri Devi, Smt, 119, 183
- Sawhney, I. D., 87
- Scottish Trade Union Congress, 168, 182
- Seamens' Conference, 53
Union, xxvii, 116
- Second International, lxxxviii
- Seheidemann, xiii
- Sen, I. B., 108, 174
- Servant, 108, 110
- Service contracts, 52
- Shaukat Ali, lxxxv
- Simla, xiv, li
- Simpson, 108
- Singh, Deep Narain, 167
- Singh, Mrs Deep Narain, xxxi, 55, 60
- Singh, Harnam, lx
- Singh, Tej, xxix, xxx, 48
- Sinha, K. P. Sen, xxvii, 116, 169
- Sinn Fein, xii, lxvii
- Sircar, Nibaran Ch., 108
- Social-Democratic Party, lxviii
- Social worker, 20
- Socialism, x, xv, xvii, xix, xxxii, xlvi, lxxxi, lxxxvii, 33, 34, 40, 109, 130, 137, 145, 147, 180
- Socialist (-ic), xii, xiii, xv, xvi, xxix, lxxix
- Socialist revolution, 106
- South Africa, xlix
- Soviet Russia, xv, 33

- Special Committee, 99
 franchise, 57
 session of Congress, 99
 Spiritualism, 25
 Spoor, Ben, 7
 Statesman, 36, 156, 165
 Statistics department, 5
 Strike and lock-out negotiations, 8
 Subhani, Umar, lxxiv, lxxvi, lxxix, 55
 Sudhak, M., 77
 Surat, xxxix, liv, lviii
 Swadharma, 112
 Swaraj, resolution on, 111 to 119
 Sympathising Unions, 5, 82-84
- Tairsee, L. R., lxxiii, lxxvi, 10, 45, 54, 59, 60, 76, 87, 154
 Tata (also Tata works), xxvii, lxxxi, 48
 Tata, Sir Dorab, 163
 Tata, Jamshedji, xxix, lvii, lxxix, 48
 Tacker, D. D., 108
 Tea plantations (also gardens), xxxi, xl, lxix, 7, 52, 77, 134
 Thengadi M., 108, 118
 Thackersey, Hansraj, lxxii, lxxiii, 10
 Tilak, Lokmanya B., xii, xvi, xxiii, xxiv, xxxv-xl, xlvii-liv, lvii-lx, lxii-lxx, lxxiii-lxxvi, lxxxiii, lxxxv, lxxxvii, 4, 37, 109, 152, 167, 191, 192
 Times (London), xv, 33
 Times of India, lvi, lxiv, 53, 58
 Trade Union (also unionist), ix, xx, xxviii, xxxiii, xxxv-xxxvii, xxxix, liii, lx, lxxviii-lxix, lxxxiii, lxvii, lxxxv, lxxxvi, 6, 9, 37, 40, 42, 44, 45, 47-49, 52, 67-69, 73, 74, 88, 98, 106, 125, 134, 136, 141, 147, 148, 150, 174, 180, 182, 184
 Congress, xxviii, 40, 119, 124, 126-129, 134, 140, 141, 148, 149, 155-157, 162-164, 166, 168, 171, 172, 174-176, 180, 184, 186
 delegates, 40
 movement, ix, xiv, xxi, xxviii, xxxv, lvii, lxxix xc, 26, 106
 Organisation, xxxv
 Union International, 171
 Transport Workers' Federation, 37
 Trivedi, Damodar K., 162
 Tsar (ist), xlvii, 1
 Turkey, xi, xvii
- Uganda, xlv
 United States (also America), xiii, xv, xvii, lii, lxvi, 15, 20, 25-28, 33, 34, 146
 President, 27
 Unemployed (-ment), 49, 50
 Unskilled labour, 35
 Uttar Pradesh (UP), xxxi, lvii, 104, 164
 Viceroy, lxxxi, 148, 150
 Victoria, Queen, xlv, 151
 Vincent, Sir William, 79
 Viswananda, Swami, lxxxi, lxxxii, 4, 7, 56, 126, 160, 162, 166, 174, 182, 183
 Wadia, B. P., xxiv, lxxv, 6, 10, 19, 20, 54, 57, 73, 156
 Wage earners, 35, 57
 Wage of workers, 51
 Washington, xxxv, lvii, lxxviii, 31, 49, 132, 148, 176, 186
 Watkins N., lxxxix
 Wedgwood, Colonel J. V., xxix, 7, 9, 17, 37, 39, 40-42, 53
 Welfare of workers, 150, 181
 Wheeler, lxix
 Wildridge, 47
 Willie, Sir William Curzon, lx
 Willingdon, Lord, lxxiv
 Wilson, xvii
 Women workers, 62, 63
 Workers and peasants, 103
 representatives of, xxxvi
 skilled, 28
 welfare, xxxiii
 Working-class movement, xxi, xxviii
 World Federation of Trade Unions, lxxxix

About the book

More than two generations have passed since the AITUC was founded in 1920. The working class of today, especially its younger generation, is no longer what it was at the time of the foundation of the AITUC. It is necessary for the workers of today to know how and for what they fought yesterday. Knowledge of history is one of the most essential weapons to fight the present and future battles.

The Volume One of *AITUC—Fifty Years: Documents* deals with the origins of the trade-union movement in India and covers along with background material the first two sessions of the AITUC—the first inaugural session (Bombay, 31 October to 2 November 1920) and the second session (Jharia, 30 November to 2 December 1921).

The period of 1919 to 1922 was one of tremendous national upheaval, a period of revolutionary uprisings of the Indian people against British imperialism and for national liberation. It was not an isolated phenomenon of Indian history. It was a part of the process of world revolution against imperialism the process of which was greatly influenced by the October Revolution of 1917 in Russia.

The Russian revolution had a tremendous impact on the minds of the Indian people, and particularly on the working class, by its national-revolutionary and class-emancipatory role and ideology. The very first session of the AITUC appreciated this fact of history.

This volume gives, apart from all the documents related to the first two AITUC sessions and the trade-union activities of the period, the press coverage of the period. Two documents that have appeared in the addenda (Tilak Trial Disturbances, 1908, taken from *Source Material for History of Freedom Movement in India*, collected from Bombay Government Records, Vol. II, 1885-1920; Bombay Workers' First Political Strike, 1908, written by D. S. Home) will help the readers to know how trade-union and political consciousness took shape in 1908 and actually this 1908 workers' struggle paved the way for the founding of the AITUC in 1920.

The 82-page Introduction by S. A. Dange (General Secretary of the AITUC and Chairman of the CPI) adds to the value of the volume. This well-written Introduction is not only an introduction to this volume but also to the origins of the trade-union movement in India.
