



CHAPTER III

THE FORMATION OF MODERN TRADE UNION MOVEMENT AS A SOCIAL MOVEMENT: 1972-1976

The years between October 14, 1973 to October 6, 1976 were the best years for the development of the social movements in Thailand. For the workers' movement, the labour organisations could be formed again after the new labour protection laws had been promulgated. During this period, the modern trade unions could develop and play an important role as an important social movement in Thailand. By defining a social movement as a series of collective actions by people with common interests who have mass mobilisation as their source of power in sustained interaction with elite, opponents, and authorities, and are chiefly concerned with defending or changing society or its position of social relations, Thai trade unionism in 1973-1976 had reached the level of social movement in terms of both mobilisation- capability and social concerns.

In this chapter, the social movement unionism model is used to analyse the character of the trade union movement in which the unionism is the integration of three components: defense of the common interests of the workers, class collective action, and participation of the unions in the movements for political proposals and other broad social objectives.

3.1 Workers' Movement in Thailand Prior to 1972

The first worker organisation in Thailand, which tried to function as a trade union in fighting to improve wage and working conditions of its members, was the Tramway Workers' Association of Siam (TWAS). Being formed in 1932, the TWAS was a friendly society of the Siam Electrical Company's tramway workers. After the ruling regime had been transformed into parliamentary system in the mid-1932, a number of labour associations in various industries were established to fight for better wages and working conditions of the wage earners.

In January 1957, the first Labour Relations Act in Thailand, which allowed the employees in private and state enterprises to form trade unions, was promulgated. But trade unions formed under the 1957 Labour Relations Act were short lived. All trade unions were banned after Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat staged a coup d' e tat and established a military dictatorship. Consequently, the development of the trade union movement

in Thailand stagnated for more than a decade from 1958 to 1971. However, one could not deny that the pre-1958 labour movement was the base for the growth of trade union movement in the early 1970s.

In academic studies, the role of organised workers pre-1972 was recognized in two different views. Some scholars seem disenchanted with Thai workers historical roles in the early period of its development, but others have recognized the significance of those organised workers in the process of political and social development. The former view appears in the studies written before 1980, while the latter could be seen in the works published after 1980.

As an example of the former view, two Western scholars presented arguments which seriously underestimate the political consciousness of Thai workers in the post-World War II period, up 1958. Virginia Thompson, in her study on labour problems in Southeast Asia, indicated that Thai labour in the post- World War II period had undergone no marked development and, as in the prewar days, still lagged far behind all other countries in Southeast Asia. Thompson viewed Thai workers in the new democratic regime as only being interested in the improvement of working conditions without demanding political representation or showing some degree of political consciousness (Thompson 1947: 242-243). Bevas Marbry claimed that the activities of early Thai labour organisations (1932-1958) should not be described as a labour movement because these organisations were predominantly composed of shopkeepers, hawkers, rickshaw pullers, and other workers marginally attached to the labour force. He therefore remarked that “ although Thai workers in the early period had organisations that called themselves labour unions, it is questionable whether Thailand, in fact, has until recently ever had a true labour movement” (Marbry 1977: 931).

The above assertions contrast sharply with the results found in a number of contemporary researches on the Thai labour movement. These research works have challenged Thompson and Marbry in two main points.

1. Labour organisations in the pre-1958 period were composed of workers in manufacturing and service industries which were not only at the margin but also at the core of the labour force during that period.

2. Since the 1930s some groups of organised workers had already developed a political consciousness and made some contributions to the development of Thai politics.

3.1.1 The Emergence of Wage Labour in Thai Society.

Capitalist relations of production in Thailand emerged in the mid-nineteenth century. The negotiation between King Rama IV and the British government in 1855 has been described as the most important external force behind this emergence. A number of scholars viewed that this Treaty, and other similar treaties negotiated with other Western nations over the following decades proved to be a catalyst which facilitated the opening up of Thailand's economic, political and social life to Western influence.

But, although the capitalist economy obviously grew faster after 1855, the pre-1855 Thai society was not essentially static, possessing little or no internal dynamic of its own. According to Nidhi Aeusriwong, external pressure per se cannot really determine the direction of change in any society. In fact, seeds of change had already existed in Thai society before 1855 and became a good base to the development of capitalism in the opening of the economy after 1855 (Nidhi Aeusriwong 1982: 73-77).

Some of those important seeds of change were caused by the breakdown in the system of traditional labour practices (phrai or corvee system) as well as the creation of a pool of free labour power within an essentially pre-capitalist economy. The breakdown of the corvee system led to the increasingly widespread employment of immigrant Chinese labour which was much cheaper than labour in the corvee system (Somkiat Wanthana 1982: 147). Chinese immigration provided the major contribution to source of supply of wage labour until the 1930s. The migrant stream was choked off in the late 1930s, resumed briefly after the Second World War, and was stopped in 1949 (Pasuk and Baker 1995: 187).

The growth of wage-labour after the collapse of the corvee system was stimulated by the effect of the Bowring Treaty, which pushed Thailand into an international system of division of labour. The development of industry and the employment of wage labour served to complement the growth in trade and the commercialisation of agriculture. With the rapid growth in rice exports, milling became an area of industrial activity, which required an increasing number of wage-workers (Suehiro 1985: 25). The first steam mill was established in 1855 by

American capital and thereafter the number of mills expanded rapidly as well as the increasing number of employees working in these mills (Somkiat Wanthana 1982: 25).

The expansion of the rice trade also led to the establishment of commercial banks in order to facilitate credits for rice exports. These commercial banks employed a significant number of employees, who were the first generation of white-collar workers in Thailand. In addition, during the Reign of King Rama Five (1868-1910) the government began to invest in many public utilities. The development of infrastructure projects, such as the construction of railway, tramway, ports, electricity generating plants, roads and bridges, also led to the growth in the demand for wage-labour.

However, the growth of white-collar workers in state enterprises was obvious after the 1932 revolution, which transformed the absolute monarchy into a parliamentary system. Under the democratic regime, the new political elite lacked its own economic base, since at that time manufacturing and trade were under the control of royal domains, Chinese and Westerns capitalists. The new government, under the leadership of the People's Party, therefore developed a nationalist economic strategy, aimed primarily at eliminating royal privilege and curbing the role of foreign capitalists in the Thai economy while creating its own economic base (Narong Petprasert 1992: 48). One of the implementations of the nationalist policies was the establishment of state enterprises in every sector of production. During the Second World War period, the government succeeded in nationalising many foreign undertaking including forestry, mining and banking (Sungsidh Piriyaungsarn 1980: 85-91).

Up to 1960, the agricultural sector still absorbed more than 80 per cent of wage-workers. However, from 1937-1960 the proportions of agricultural employees gradually declined while the proportion of employees in the non-agricultural sector expanded at moderate levels (see table 1).

Table 1: Employed Persons in Thailand by Industry, 1937-1960

Industry	1937	1947	1960
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	6,044,497 88.57%	7,623,181 84.78%	11,334,383 82.0%
Mining and Quarrying	17,512 0.26%	4,805 0.05%	29,568 0.2%
Manufacturing	110,862 1.62%	195,875 2.18%	471,027 3.4%
Construction, Repair, and Demolition	228,28 0.33%	8,149 0.09%	68,581 0.5%
Electricity, Gas, Water, and Sanitary Services	106,925 1.57%	2,182 0.02%	15,463 0.1%
Commerce	303,520 4.45%	706,974 7.86%	779,904 5.6%
Transportation, Storage and Communication	57,905 0.85%	65,860 0.73%	165,778 1.2%
Services	160,007 2.34	273,698 3.04%	655,271 4.7%
Activities not Adequately Described	-	111,374 1.24%	251,425 1.8%
Total	6,824,056 100%	8,992,098 100%	13,772,104 100%

Source: National Statistical Office, *Year Book of Labour Statistics 1968 and Kanchada 1989: 22*).

3.1.2 Spontaneous Collective Action of Unorganised Workers before the 1932 Revolution

The late absolute monarchy regime saw the appearance of labour unrest among Chinese and Thai workers. However, up to 1932, labour strikes in Bangkok were mostly held by Chinese workers. Some strikes did not aim only at demanding the improvement of working conditions but including political issues or were against the government's treatment of Chinese in Thai society. For example, in August 1905, the Chinese port coolies refused to handle American ships for several days in order to

protest against the US government policy towards China. In July 1910, when the government raised the poll-tax on the Chinese, the Chinese Association organised a general strike which closed down the shops, port, rice mills, construction sites, and railways for five days (Pasuk and Baker 1995: 176). As another example, in February 1917 Chinese workers of the Makasarn Railway held a strike to protest against an unfair dismissal of a Chinese worker by a Western foreman (Kanchada Poonphanich 1989:77).

However, the strikes that mobilised the largest number of Chinese workers were the three strikes of the rickshaw pullers in 1916, 1932, and 1933. These strikes were participated in by thousands of unorganised Chinese rickshaw pullers in Bangkok in an attempt to secure a reduction in the rents charged for their vehicles, and to protest against the government's restricted rules on the control of rickshaw pulling (Punnee Bourlek 1999: 72-79).

Apart from the Chinese workers' strikes, the early 1920s also saw an important strike of the tramway workers, which led to the formation of the first labour association in Thailand. By the end of the Second World War, the work-force in the railways, electricity plants, and tramways had been a large proportion of Thai workers. At the same time, industrial relations conflicts also appeared in these enterprises. Up to the 1940s, most of the workers reacted to what they felt was maltreatment or excessive exploitation by complaining of unfairness or sending petitions to their employers or to the government.

According to a survey of labour petitions from 1932-1943, the major labour grievances were wage-related issues, working conditions and discrimination practices of the employers (Kanchada 1989: 245-248). This style of petition is viewed as a norm of labour relations in traditional Thai society in which Thai workers brought with them some of the expectation of reciprocity between master and worker (Pasuk and Baker 1995: 179). However, when their petitions evoked no response, the workers also decided to use a more militant style such as a strike.

The strike in the pre- 1930s that has been most recognized is the strike of the electrical tramway workers of the Siam Electrical Company* . The workers went on strike twice, on December 31, 1922 and on January 13-21, 1923, respectively, after they had presented their employers with a petition complaining about reduction in payment, the proliferation of petty regulations and working rules, and the uncompassionate, and inhuman ways of the supervisors. The protest developed into the longest and most disruptive labour dispute the city had seen (Pasuk and Baker 1995: 180)

Although the strike ended in the defeat of the tramway workers, it was the beginning of the Thai workers' movement that led to the first cooperation between workers and middle class intellectuals and later to the building up of the first labour organisation in Thailand. These urban intellectuals mostly were journalists who were sympathetic to the ideological opposition to absolute monarchy. During the tramway workers strike, this group of journalists established a pro-labour weekly magazine, *The Labour* (กรรมกร), which would exist for three years from 1923-1925. The editorial term of *The Labour* called themselves, The Labour Group (คณะกรรมกร).

During the early period of the labour movement, Thawat Ritthidej and his association attempted to secure a voice for labour through news and articles published in the pro- labour magazines. In addition, Thawat tried to link the interests of labour with wider public interests by arguing that the various problems of the workers were, to some extents, problems shared by all the people. In drawing attention to these matters Thawat emphasized that the aims of the Labour Group was not only to benefit workers but also to represent all the people's interests (Brown 1990:76).

* The Siam Electrical Co. Ltd. was established in 1855 by Danish and Thai capital. In 1899 the company merged with an American-owned company, the Bangkok Electricity Light Syndicate Company and was commissioned to produce electricity for government offices as well as to operate electrical tramway routes in Bangkok. The company later changed the name to Thai Electric Corporation Company and after the concession ended in 1950, the company was transferred into a state enterprise, the Metropolitan Electricity Authority (Bundit Thammairat 1984: 221-222)

3.1.3 The Formation of Movement Organisations

Since the early 1930s, the spontaneous actions of workers had become a movement under the leadership of labour organisations. The growth of labour organisations during the 1930s-1950s was influenced by several factors. First, the economic depression since the late 1920s resulted in a high rate of unemployment and reduction in wages. In the late 1920s the Thai economy was in crisis as a result of world economic great depression. A major cause of economic crisis was the decline in export trade, particularly, a fall in the prices of rice and tin, the nation's main export commodities. Consequently, there was a reduction of production in the cement plants, rice mills and saw mills, and a decrease of wages in these firms. In addition, between 1929 and 1932 the absolute monarchy government cut down government official salaries, and laid off civil servants (Kanchada Poonphanich 1989: 80-81). During this period spontaneous strikes were frequent before the workers formed their organisations.

Second, while the workers were facing the problems of job insecurity and wage reduction, there was a great political change on June 24, 1932. The absolute monarchy was abolished by a group of military and civilians calling themselves The People's Party (คณะราษฎร). The democratic climate after the 1932 revolution was a favorable condition for workers to express their dissatisfaction with the employment conditions through labour strikes and organising labour associations. Third, an alliance between some groups of organised workers and the intellectuals as well as the growth of socialism in Thai society had stimulated the involvement of workers in political movements.

Several months after the 1932 revolution, the employees of the Siam Electricity Company formed the Tramway Workers' Association of Siam (TWAS), the first labour organisation in Thailand, on October 14, 1932. Thawat Ritthidet was elected as the first president of the TWAS. However, the TWAS was not a worker association that had the right of collective bargaining, but a friendly society, which aimed to: i) instruct members on proper and virtuous behavior; ii) exchange knowledge among members; iii) promote happiness, and good health; iv) help the elderly and disabled members; reform thieves and; v) promote unity among members (Siroj Khlampaiboon 1999: 184).

The forms of movement organisations were two types: formal organisations and loose organisations. The formal organisations

comprised the employee associations, labour federations and national labour organisations. The loose organisation was a coalition of labour organisations from various industries. The latter organisation was formed after the formal national organisation had been banned by the government.

It was in the 1940s that the workers in various occupations began to form labour associations that could really function as a trade union. In addition, in 1944 these labour associations in Bangkok joined together to form a labour federation, which later, in 1946, registered as the Association of the United Trade Workers of Bangkok (AUTWB- สมาคมสหอาชีพกรรมกรกรุงเทพ) The AUTWB consisted of 23 labour associations of workers from different enterprises in Bangkok and Thonburi i.e., tobacco, electricity and tramway, railways, rice and saw mills, printing, ship-building, transportation, lathe shops, cement, match, soap and textile, oil, and other small trades (Kanchada Poonphanich 1989: 128).

The building up of the AUTWB, based on workers from various manufacturing and services industries, illustrated that, in the 1940s, labour organisations had been already composed of labour forces in the main parts of industrial production. In addition, in April 1947, a national labour centre had been established, when 64 delegates from labour associations in Bangkok and provincial areas organised a meeting at the office of the AUTWB and formed the Association of United Trade Workers of Thailand (Sungsidh 1986: 163) or, the other better-known English name, the Central Union of Thailand (CUT- สหอาชีพกรรมกรแห่งประเทศไทย).

The CUT was the first labour organisation in Thailand, which aimed to represent workers interests at a national level. The objectives of the CUT were to (Brown 1990:110): i) cooperate with progressive social forces and promote labour organisations; ii) provide educational and welfare assistance to workers; iii) assist in the settlement of labour disputes; iv) effect mutual cooperation and aid among member organisations and; v) act as a representative organisation for workers generally. In 1947, the members of the CUT were 75,000 workers from 51 labour associations. Around 40 percent were Chinese workers but most of the committee members were Thais. As the representative organisation of workers at national level, the CUT demanded the government enact labour protection laws that limited maximum working hours at 48 per week, allowed the workers to have rights of association and strike, and introduce a social security system for the workers (Pichit

Chongsathitwattana 1974: 92-93). In 1949, the CUT expanded its activities to international level when it affiliated to the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU).

While the organised workers played an active role in the workers' movement, the government began to intervene in the development of worker organisations. In 1946-1947 the government was headed by two political parties, Sahacheep and New Rathammanoon, both under the influence of Pridi Banomyong, and the growth of a labour movement was in accord with Pridi's democratic ideology. However, after the 1947 military coup d' etat, Field Marshal Phibun Songkram once again became Prime Minister. In 1949, the government outlawed the CUT when it refused to renew the CUT's license. In addition, from 1949-1956, several other new labour associations were established with the support of the military government. These included the Labour Association of Thailand (LAT- สมาคมกรรมกรแห่งประเทศไทย), and the Free Labour Association (FLA – สมาคมแรงงานเสรี). When a number of unions in the capitalist countries had withdrawn from the WFTU in 1949 and formed a new International Confederation of trade Unions (ICFTU), the LAT affiliated to the ICFTU.

After the CUT had been banned by the government, a new coordinating center of labour organizations, the Sixteen Worker Groups (SWG-กรรมกร 16 หน่วย) was established in March 1956. The SWG derived from a temporary coalition among worker organizations to achieve the legalisation of strikes and union rights. It was comprised of sixteen member organizations within the networks of three main organizations, i.e., the new established Labour Party, the Labour Association of Thailand, and the former CUT. The lists of these 16 organisations are as follows (Damri and Jaron 1986: 140-141):

- three groups of tricycle drivers
- the Petty Trade Federation
- two groups of state railway workers from Makasan and Bangsue plants
- a group of rice mill workers
- a group of saw mill workers
- a group of electricity tramway workers
- a group of sea transport workers
- a group of state tobacco factory workers
- a group of textile workers at Bangsorn
- the Baro Bown Company (communication)'s workers
- the Express Transportation Organization's workers

- the Women Workers's Federation
- the Thai Labour Association

The SWG was a type of social network that organised around the specific issues of the workers' demands on labour rights. The SWG played significant role in forcing the House of Representative to pass the first Labour Relations Act in 1956. The 1956 Labour Relations Act was the first labour law in Thailand. Under this Act, the regulations on working conditions, overtime and compensation pay, labour rights, including trade union rights, were first introduced (Nikhom Chandravitoon 1972: 129-131). After the enactment of this law on January 1, 1957, it was reported that 154 trade unions, and 2 labour federations, the Labour Federation of Thailand and the Women Workers' Federation of Thailand, were established (Suvidh Yingwaraphan 1978: 60).

However, trade unions formed under the 1956 Labour Relations Act were short-lived, since Field Marshall Sarit Thanarat staged a military coup d' e tat on October 20, 1958 to seize power from the Phibun government. The Sarit government abolished the labour law, outlawed unions and strikes. After this coup, the 1956 Labour Relation Act was replaced by the Announcement of the Revolutionary Party No. 19 which banned both trade unions and labour strikes. In addition, a number of labour leaders of the SWG, the LAT, and of other labour organisations were arrested and imprisoned (APF working group 1988: 65).

3.1.4 The Role of the Labour Organisations in Political Movements.

It was obvious that the labour organisations in the pre- 1958 period did not present themselves only as representatives of workers' particular interests, but also participated in the political movement for broad social objectives. When the TWAS, the first labour organisation, was established in October 1932, it did not only try to provide benefits for its members but also led the tramway workers to participate in political issues in order to protect the new parliamentary democratic system. For example, when there was a rebellion of the pro-royalist forces (Bowaradej Revolt) in October 1933, Thawat Ritthidet led the tramway workers to join the Government Army Garrison and Volunteer Troop as the " Constitution Protectors" to support the People's Party government in fighting against the rebellion (Siroj Khampaiboon 1999: 189).

After the establishment of the CUT in 1947, organised workers began to play a more active role in political movements. This development was significantly influenced by the international politics of the 1940s. First, during the Second World War period when the Japanese invaded Thailand, it was reported that the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT)* could set up a secret network among the Thai workers called, "The Anti-Japanese Workers Unite"(Kanchada Poonphanich 1989: 128). Moreover, in 1946 the Bangkok Association of United Trade Unions formed an organisation to assist the workers and other people who had suffered in the War (Sungsidh Piriyaungsarn 1986: 152).

Second, in the post-WW II period, Thailand began to engage in the cold - war politics between the capitalist and socialist camps. The Thai government cut down relationships with the socialist countries including the People's Republic of China. The CPT proposed a non-alignment foreign policy and called for the country's opening of foreign relations with China. Through this proposition, the CPT could form a link with some journalists, intellectuals, politicians, and labour leaders.

It was also evidenced that a number of workers in the 1940s favored socialism. For example, Visit Sriphatha, the President of the Makasan Railway Workers Representatives in 1946, and Boonxong Vijarana, a committee member of the CUT in 1948, were two of the founders of the Socialist Party of Thailand in 1956(Sungsidh Piriyaungsarn 1986: 185). In addition, Damri Reungsutham, the general-secretary of the CUT in 1947 later became a member of the CPT's politburo (Kanchada Poonphanich 1989: 124).

Another important activity of organised workers in the political movement was the cooperation between workers and intellectuals in the Peace Movement in the early 1950s. Similarly to the 1930s, a number of journalists, who were the critical intellectuals of the 1950s, acted as the spokesmen of the workers through their articles and novels. The sympathy of these intellectuals led to a cooperation between some groups of journalists and intellectuals in order to join the International Peace Movement in April 1951. The goals of the Thai Peace Movement were to

* The Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) was a pro-Chinese Communist Party evolved from the Communist Party of Siam which was established in 1930. The Communist Party of Siam held its first national congress on December 1, 1942 and later changed its name to The Communist Party of Thailand (Kanchada Poonphanich 1989: 123).

oppose the country's involvement in the new Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO), to protest against the government's subordination to the US military and economic aid, and its offer to send troops to fight in the Korean War. The Thai Peace Movement was led by Charoon Suebsang, an elected MP from the South.

The workers involved in the Peace Movement also organised social activities such as collecting clothes, blankets, food, medicine, and money to donate to the poor people in the Northeast. However, the activities of the Peace Movement ended when the leaders were arrested on November 10, 1952 and accused of being rebel. Immediately after this event, the government promulgated the Anti- Communist Act on November 13, 1952 and arrested the other 200 people including workers and peasants with the same accusation of being rebel (Damri and Jaroon 1986: 99-100).

Although the development of the Thai Peace Movement was short-lived and did not gain much support from the general public, this movement indicated that in the early period of labour movement, some groups of organised workers were concerned about wider social interests beyond their own immediate benefits.

In the mid-1950s, the political climate changed again when the Phibun government mitigated the political tension and conflict in society by using more democratic political policies. Under the new environment, a number of pro- worker political parties were established. The Labour Party was formed in September 1955 by a number of workers from the Makasan Railway Plant and other enterprises. The Socialist Party was also set up in March 1956 by a number of rice mill workers and other professionals (Kanchada Poonphanich 1988: 181-182).

Although most organised workers and labour organisations did not play active political roles, a small group of labour organisations and some individual labour leaders occasionally involved themselves in political movements. These workers allied with the social- critic intellectuals in opposition to the absolute rule of the monarchy, to participate in the international peace movement, and to form political parties. The role of workers and their organisations in the political movement during the 1930s- 1950s was influenced by several main factors.

First, the emergence of intellectuals as a catalyst of social transition had encouraged some groups of organised workers to engage in political activities. Second, the 1932 democratic revolution brought about a new

political climate and a favorable condition for workers to express their political goals. Third, the international socialist movement, in particular, the victory of the Chinese Communist Party in China, had resulted in the increasing popularity of socialism among some groups of intellectuals and workers in Thailand.

3.1.5 Summary

The labour movement in Thailand originated from the spontaneous actions of unorganised workers, but became a movement under the leadership of labour organisations when economic development and political opportunities facilitated the growth of the movement.

From the late nineteenth century, wage labour had become a significant factor in the Thai economy and before the mid- twentieth century labour organisations became an important social force in society. The early manifestations of the workers' movement were characterized by the spontaneous strikes and the movement of organised workers in order to improve wages and working conditions. This labour unrest was the response to the new nature of work. Since the second half of the nineteenth century, the emergence of the factory system and service industry had changed the form of productive relations, from master and servant to employer and employee. The new industrial disciplines also led to a modern industrial relation conflict between the employer and employee. The forming of employee associations, which later transformed into trade unions was therefore the response to this new social relationship. Since the 1940s, these labour organisations were composed of workers in various manufacturing and service industries. The organised workers had formed not only the enterprise- based unions, but also several national coordinating centres, which aimed to provide common benefits for the wage earners. When the national coordinating centres were not effective in defending the common interests of the workers, a loose organisation was formed to replace the formal organisations in pursuing the workers' collective demands.

The workers' movement in the 1930s-1950s was not an isolated movement but could gain sympathy from some groups of the middle-class, particularly the critical intellectuals. Some groups of the labour leaders also involved themselves in the political movement that linked the workers with other social activists.

The development of the workers' movement was interrupted by state intervention. Prior to 1958, the Thai government employed two

strategies as the measures to weaken the workers' movement and limit the collective actions of organised workers. First, under the democratic regime, the government intervened in the development of labour organisations by promoting government-supported labour associations to compete with the workers' organisations. Second, under military dictatorship, the government employed violent suppression as the main strategy of labour control.

Although the development of labour organisations was interrupted for more than a decade by the military coup d'état in 1958, the growth of the labour movement in this period was an important base of the trade union movement in the post-1972 period.

3.2 Industrial Development Policy in the 1970s and the Impact on Labour

The growth of the industrial economy in the 1970s was a consequence of economic policies since the 1960s. After the 1958 coup, the Sarit Thanarat government launched a series of new industrial policies to achieve national economic development (Suehiro 1989:179-180). The government with the World Bank's resources and recommendations set up the infrastructure and other means necessary to support the programs of industrialization which were dramatically successful. In 1961, the First Six-Year National Economic Development Plan was launched to promote the country's industrialization, based on the strategy of import-substitution.

The government also adopted investment incentive policies in order to attract local and foreign private capitals. The Revolutionary Party Proclamation No.33 of December 5, 1958 promised the participating firms various privileges, such as exemptions from import duties and corporate taxes, tax holidays, and freedom to remit profits out of the country. In the Proclamation No. 19 of October 30, 1958, the government abolished the 1956 Labour Relations Act, by which the Phibun government had permitted union rights to workers. Since this new proclamation prohibited trade unions as well as strikes, domestic and foreign investors were able to carry on their business activities without any fear of involvement in labour relation problems.

Along with investment promotion, the government also attempted to drastically restructure the existing tariff system of selected products. Unlike the procedure adopted in the prewar period, which had primarily aimed at increasing central government revenue, the changes in the tariff

system under the Sarit regime were designed to protect infant domestic manufacturers, including foreign producers in Thailand.

Finally, the government virtually prohibited state participation in those commercial and industrial activities, which might be expected to directly compete with private capital. The government also promised to regulate the expansion of existing state enterprises in the future. The role of state enterprises was basically confined to building the economy's infrastructure by providing electricity, water supply, and transportation facilities, and creating an investment climate in favor of the private sector (Revolutionary Party Proclamation No.33).

After the death of Sarit in 1963, political power passed to another military leader, Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn, who followed Sarit's economic strategy throughout his long regime from 1963-1973. Under such government policies, Thailand experienced rapid economic growth caused by two major factors (Suehiro 1989: 182). First, an influx of foreign capital into Thailand supplemented a shortage of capital and technology. Secondly, financial support from abroad in the form of loans from the World Bank and grants and military aid from the US contributed crucially to increases in public expenditure, and hence the completion of the infrastructure and the expansion of the domestic market. Consequently, during the first four National Economic Development plans, high growth rates of GDP stemmed from the rapid growth of the non-agricultural sector, in particular, the expansion of infrastructure (see table2).

Table 2: Annual Growth of GDP in Thailand: 1961-1976

Sector	First Plan (1961-66)	Second Plan (1967-71)	Third Plan (1972-76)
Agriculture	4.6	4.1	3.9
Mining	10.9	8.1	-0.5
Manufacturing	10.2	9.2	8.6
Construction	12.3	8.4	4.0
Electricity, Water supply	18.2	20.7	14.4
Communication	9.0	7.5	8.1
Banking, Insurance	16.6	14.4	5.1
Wholesale, Retail	8.0	7.7	4.8
GDP	7.3	7.2	6.2

Sources: NESDB, *National Income of Thailand, 1986*, and Suehiro 1989, p. 182

Following the industrial development policy of the 1960s, employment in manufacturing accelerated while the sources of labour supply also changed in character. Chinese immigration was no longer a major source of wage labour. During the 1960s and early 1970s, the additions to the urban labour force came from two sources, natural increase in the urban population and the migrant workers from the countryside. From the mid- 1950s, Thailand's population grew fast. The main proximate cause was a decline in the infant mortality rate resulting from better standards of childcare, nutrition, and medical care. Between 1971 and 1982, the population grew from around 35.2 to 48.6 million, or 37 percent, converting Thailand from a society, which was labour- scarce into a labour abundant one (Pasuk and Baker 1995: 188).

However, this demographic spurt did not result in a sudden migration into the cities. In 1971, around 13.1 million or 79 per cent of the total labour force was still working in agriculture, while 3.4 million or 20.1 per cent worked in non- agriculture. (see table 3).

Table 3: Population by Employment Status, 1971-1976

Year	Population	Labour Force	Employed Persons		Unemployed Persons
			In Agriculture	In Non-Agriculture	
1971	35,265,970	16,653,920	131,57,680	3,460,960	35,280
1972	36,221,780	16,214,960	11,642,150	4,487,340	85,470
1973	38,658,070	17,116,550	12,270,480	4,772,180	73,890
1974	39,869,800	17,231,640	11,226,270	5,932,870	72,500
1975	40,981,780	18,255,190	13,270,040	4,911,550	73,600
1976	42,130,630	18,565,540	13,948,390	4,462,520	154,630

Source: Department of Labour, Ministry of Interior, *Year Book of Labour Statistics 1983*

Note: Labour force in this statistical table are all persons aged 11 years and over.

The industrial development policy of the 1960s resulted in several changes in establishment structure. First, in the private sector the average number of employees per establishment increased significantly in 1970. In addition, the proportion of establishments, which employed 100 persons or more increased from 47 % in 1963 to 72 % in 1970, whereas the proportion of those with 10-19 employees dropped from 15 % to 6 % in the same period. This development indicated that industrialisation in the 1960s brought about the enlargement of factory employment size on

the one hand, and a decline in the economic position of small-scale establishments on the other (Suehiro 1989: 184).

Another change was the rapid growth of such promoted industries as textile, auto-assembling, electrical appliances, secondary steel products, and food processing. These industries belonged to a category of import-substitution industries, which exclusively depended upon the domestic market, and enjoyed growth under tariff protection as well as investment incentives. However, the domestic, small-scale manufacturers could not move into the promoted industries because the Board of Investment had encouraged only large-scale firms by regulating either the minimum amount of investment or minimum production capacity of the promoted firms (Suehiro 1989: 185).

In the public sector, although the government emphasized the promotion of industrialisation in the private sector, the providing of infrastructure to facilitate the operations of private business such as electricity, water supply, transportation and communication resulted in the growth of employees in these public utilities. For example, the number of employees in the Metropolitan Electricity Authority increased from 2,950 in 1959 to 4,900 in 1962, and about 5,800 in 1970. For another, the number of employees in the Metropolitan Waterworks Authority increased from 3,000 in 1967 to 5,000 in 1973 (Narong Petprasert 1992: 59). However, the number of government employees, including civil servants and state enterprise employees, from 1971 to 1976, was around only one third of the private employees (see table 4). Nevertheless, the increasing size of state enterprises became one of the important factors for the strength of state enterprise unions in the 1970s.

Table 4: Employed Persons Aged 11 Years and Over by Work Status, 1971-1976

Year	Employed Persons	Work Status					
		Employer	Gov.t Employee	Private Employee	Own Account Worker	Unpaid Family Worker	Un-known
1971	16,618,640	164,900	608,900	1,564,030	5,105,160	9,132,570	43,080
1972	16,129,490	101,490	701,920	2,268,340	5,378,030	7,671,880	7,830
1973	17,042,660	151,700	748,750	2,652,650	5,549,430	7,934,480	5,650
1974	17,159,140	98,910	992,780	2,824,670	5,805,750	7,437,030	-
1975	18,181,590	71,980	847,770	2,464,450	6,141,390	8,656,000	-
1976	18,410,910	73,840	772,160	2,325,530	6,458,720	8,780,660	-

Source: Department of Labour, Ministry of Interior, *Year Book of Labour Statistics 1983*

Industrial development since the 1960s had been associated not only with the stagnation of labour organisations, but also with low wages and low labour standards. Data collected by the Department of Labour indicated that from 1957 to 1972, most of the unskilled workers in Bangkok received only 8-10 baht a day. On April 16, 1972 the Minister of Interior introduced the first minimum-wage rate law and set up a committee to determine the minimum wages of unskilled workers in conformity with the standard, of the ILO, that the minimum wage should allow a worker to take care of himself and two members of his family. According to this new law, a minimum wage of 12 baht a day was first made in February 1973 for unskilled workers in Bangkok, Thonburi, Nonthaburi, Pratoomthani and Samutsakorn. This minimum wage was increased to 16 baht in January.

This minimum wage rate was, however, not enough to cover the costs of living of a worker's family. A survey by a group of economists in April 1974 found that the average expenditure of a worker and two members of his family in Bangkok, which consisted of food, accommodation, clothes, medicines, and transportation costs was, at least, 26.07 baht a day (Trirong Suwankhree 1982: 181). The low wage condition was also associated with long working hours. The Department of Labour reported that in 1970 only 38 % of textile workers in Bangkok and Thonburi enjoyed a standard working week of 48 hours while 32 % and 11 % were required to work 49-59 and 60-69 hours respectively, and the remaining 18% had to work more than 70 hours a week (Sungsidh Piriyarungsarn 1989: 70).

3.3 Political Opportunity and the Growth of Social Movements after the October 14, 1973 Uprising

The period after October 1973- October 1976 saw special conditions for the growth of social movements in Thailand. Organisations of workers, students, and peasants grew rapidly and played significant roles in social transformation. The student-led uprising on October 14, 1973 resulted in the end of the military dictatorship regime and the establishment of parliamentary democracy. The period following the October 1973 revolution could be considered as a watershed in the history of the Thai trade union movement. In 1973-1976, workers did not isolate themselves from the movements of other social forces, but formed an alliance with students and peasants. In addition, the widespread socialist ideology through the growth of a revolutionary party influenced the determination of the unions' social objectives in this period.

3.3.1 The Formation of the Student Movement as a Catalyst of Social Transformation

Since the late 1960s, the Thanom government's status had become unstable due to the increasing demands of the public for democratic rule and civil liberties. Opposition against the government emerged among the middle class, particularly university students. The Thai student movement in the decade of the seventies is viewed as a catalyst of social transition (see for examples, Prizzia 1985 37-35, and Morell and Chai-anan 1981: 137-180). The organizational capacity of the student movement was greatly facilitated by the revival of the National Student Centre of Thailand (NSCT) in 1969. However, the first incident of student activities occurred before the establishment of the NSCT, almost 30 years earlier. The first student demonstration took place in October 1940 when students of Chulalongkorn and Thammasat, the two major universities of the country, were mobilised by the Phibun government to demonstrate in support of the return of former Thai territories then under French control.

In the 1950s, most students remained politically apathetic, the only important event of early student involvement in political movement was the protest against the "Dirty Election" of 1957. In February 1957, a number of university students marched to Government House to protest against election fraud. This demonstration undercut the legitimacy of the Phibun government and thus set the stage for Field Marshall Sarit Thanarat to oust it in a coup d' e tat six months later.

Before the reestablishment of the NSCT in 1969, university students had been organised through student unions, but they were characteristically nonpolitical and not linked with other universities. The NSCT was formed in 1965, but was generally inactive until 1969. It was in 1968 that student unions' leaders from the various universities began cooperating on social and political issues. The first organised student movement involved in political issues came in December 1968, when students from 15 universities and colleges set up the Student Volunteer Group to Observe the National Election being held two months later. After their successful efforts, the students revived the defunct NSCT in late 1969 in order to be a coordinating centre of student unions. Apart from the formal student unions, a number of independent student groups were also set up in various universities.

In November 1972, the NSCT launched its first public campaign to boycott Japanese goods. The NSCT could attain great popularity from the anti- Japanese goods campaign. However, in the early stage of its

movement, the NSCT did not involve itself in political issues. Although the military coup d'état had abrogated the 1968 constitution and dissolved the parliament in November 1971, the students did not carry out a massive protest until 1973. In 1973, peasants remained unorganised and labour organisations were far from being the large potential pressure groups in the country. Meanwhile, big business interest groups formed coalitions with bureaucratic politicians, often based on reciprocal patron-client arrangements. The students rapidly became the only well-organised group in society not linked to the military and bureaucracy.

The first political demonstration led by students occurred in June 1973 when 9 students were expelled from Ramkhamhaeng University after they published a magazine critical of the university administration, as well as the government. Subsequently, fifty thousand students throughout Bangkok launched a demonstration, demanding a dismissal of the Ramkhamhaeng University Rector. During the protest, the students raised an additional demand for the complete drafting of the new constitution within six months.

The student movement on constitutional issues had developed to be the greatest political uprising in Thailand. On October 14, 1973 the Thanom government was overthrown after hundreds of thousands of students and other groups of people had participated in a massive demonstration against the government from October 6 through October 13. The three top government leaders were forced to leave the country. After the October 14, 1973 uprising, students became the catalysts for nearly all of the sudden explosions of political activities and the radicalization of the other two social movements, farmer and labour movements.

The student movement after October 1973 was dominated by the radical wing of the NSCT. Most of the students were ideologically oriented towards a democratic system. However, a small core of activists adopted the Marxist- Maoist approach to solve the country's problems.* Socialism was both extensively and openly disseminated among students and intellectuals. The Maoist approach was adopted by the leaders of the Communist Party of Thailand and the members of some radical student

* The Maoist thoughts were formulated by Mao Tse- Tung, the first President of the Chinese Communist Party. By Maoist approach, China in the pre- 1949 Communist Revolution was a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society in which the proletariats needed to make an alliance with the national capitalists in order to transform the country into a socialist society.

groups in the analysis of the natures of Thai society as semi- feudal in the mode of production, and semi- colonial in political system. For these people, the semi- colonial nature of Thai society was evidenced by some political phenomena in the early 1970s. The US involvement in the Vietnam War, and its use of military bases in Thailand to conduct the war in Indochina, made the charge of the America being imperialist seem reasonable.

For radical students, the US intervention in Indochina and Thailand was viewed as a further attempt by the US imperialist to control national politics and resources. As a result, the NSCT, led by these radical students, launched a number of protests against continued U.S. military presence in the country and other similar demonstrations against what they called foreign imperialism, feudalism, and capitalism.

In early 1975, the students' popularity was declining precipitously. Part of this decline stemmed from the fact that the public began to be confused by hundreds of student protests, which had occurred all over the country. In addition, the NSCT- led student movement emphasised the expulsion of the US imperialists and the alleviation of the plight of the workers and the peasants. This emphasis was viewed by the conservatives as typical communist rhetoric. It was pointed out that the general public then was not ready for the student movement to pressure the issues of the nation's sovereignty or the improvement of living conditions for the rural poor and urban workers so aggressively or so rapidly. Many people began to think that the students' mission in politics had been fulfilled in the October 1973 incident. Further student political involvement thereafter was neither desirable nor acceptable (Morell and Chai- anan 1981: 164). This popular decline had led to the isolation of the student movement from the public before the movement was destroyed by the military coup d' e tat on October 6, 1976.

3.3.2 The Formation of the Peasant Movement

The peasantry of Thailand had long been seen by many academic observers as a fundamentally conservative element in Thai society (Turton 1978: 121). However, a new history of Thai peasantry appeared a few months after October 14, 1973. During the Democracy Propagation

Program* thousands of students had realized the peasants' problems when they visited rural villages. Some groups of student leaders became committed to organisation of the peasants and were able to convince many peasants to organise themselves in order to pressure the government to solve their problems, which were accumulated from years of neglect.

The year 1974 saw several protests and demonstrations of peasants. For example, in March, peasants staged their first large protest, gaining nationwide attention for their demands for higher paddy prices. In May, hundreds of peasants from the central provinces protested to the government over the dispossession of their land and its appropriation by capitalist moneylenders. In June, some thousands of peasants from 11 provinces traveled to Bangkok and submitted three demands to the Prime Minister calling for land, rent control, and improved procedures for setting disputes between land owners and peasants over mortgages and titles to land (Prapas Pintobtang 1998: 22). The peasants' protests were supported by the NSCT and some demonstrations accompanied by workers under the leadership of the Labour Coordination Centre of Thailand (LCCT).

The peasant movement grew rapidly. On November 19, 1974, the Peasants' Federation of Thailand (PFT) was formed as the first peasant organisation, independent of bureaucratic control, in Thailand. The objectives of the PFT were to protect the interests of the peasants, to solve the problems of the peasants, and to educate peasants about the new Land Rent Control Act** and its implications (Kanogsak Kaewthep 1987: 48-49). After the founding of the PFT, alliances of peasants, students, and workers were formally established.

The development of the PFT as an organisation to protect the interests of the farmers caused a violent reaction. It was reported that, from March 31, 1974 to August 18, 1976, thirty-seven farmer leaders,

* The Democratic Propagation program was conceived by Prime Minister Sanya Thammasak, first operated in February 1974. The program was aimed at teaching the people to understand their rights and duties in a democratic system and urging them to participate in elections. In April 1974, the state universities bureau launched the second Democratic Propagation program subtitled "Return to Rural Areas," involving 3,000 students in order to educate the peasants in the villages about democracy.

** At that time the Land Rent Control Act was on the National Assembly's Agenda. Under this act, the rent rates were determined by a formula based on the amount of land or the volume of agricultural output.

most of whom were the PFT leaders, were killed by hired gunmen. In addition, on August 3, 1975, nine PFT leaders and students were arrested in Lumphun Province. In response to this violence, the NSCT, the PFT, and the LCCT, which had already joined as a tripartite alliance organised a rally and formed the “ Forum of the People” to demand the government free the nine activists and protect people’s lives and safety (Sawalux Chaythaweeep 1990: 162). However, killings of peasant leaders continued and weakened the PFT’s activities and capabilities. As a result, the PFT had almost collapsed by the end of 1975.

3.3.3. The Communist Party of Thailand and Its Revolutionary Strategy

The history of the underground Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) can be traced as far back as 1925, when a Chinese communist agent was sent to organise overseas Chinese in Thailand. This action led to the founding of the Communist Party of Siam in 1930, whose name was changed to the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) in 1951. During the early development of the CPT, there was evidence, as discussed previously, of some relations between the CPT and the workers in the setting up of a secret network against the Japanese invasion of Thailand in the WWII period. For another, the Thai Peace Movement, which involved some labour leaders, politicians, and intellectuals, was also influenced by the CPT (Prizzia 1985: 7-11).

It was in the 1950s that the CPT could play an influential role in spreading socialist thought among the Thai intellectuals. A number of the CPT’s members in this period were the graduates of the University of Moral and Political Sciences or Thammasat University (Napaporn Ativanichayapong 1986: 53). Right from its start, the CPT’s revolutionary strategy was an imitation of a strategy put forth by the Chinese Communist Party. The essence of this strategy is to change the country political regime to a socialist system by revolution with protracted warfare via a strategy, which would first organise the masses in the rural areas and thereby enable them to surround the cities.

When the workers’ movement stagnated after Sarit Thanarat led a successful coup d’etat in 1958, the CPT continued its underground activities in the rural areas. The CPT also adjusted its strategy regarding confrontation with the government forces and began to encourage expansion through armed struggle in the provinces. Subsequently, limited warfare frequently occurred between various CPT fighting units and



government forces in the villages of the provinces throughout the countryside (Prizzia 1985: 13).

Up to 1973, the CPT had concentrated its attention on armed operations in the rural areas in pursuance of the “ countryside surrounding the city” strategy. However, after the October 14, 1973 incident, it was viewed that the CPT tried to infiltrate into the student movement, and by 1975 it was able to influence some groups of student leaders in both ideology and organisation (Pornpirom Iamtham 1987: 14-18). Workers were also a target group of the CPT. Some union activists, particularly those who were former students or had close connection with the student movement, were approached by the CPT’s cadres in order to mobilise the students to support the workers’ strikes and organisations (Narong Petprasert 1992: 203). However, it was remarked that the CPT’s effort to work with the workers was unsuccessful because the students had no experience and most CPT-committed workers were dismissed during 1974-1975 (Kanya Leelalai 1995: 3-8).

However, in 1976 the relations between the CPT and the students and workers became more obvious when some prominent leaders of students and workers were threatened by state powers and began to join the CPT in the jungle. The number of these activists incorporated into the armed- struggle of the CPT increased sharply after the military staged the coup d’ etat on October 6, 1976.

3.4 Organisations of Workers’ Collective Action

During 1972-1976, the Thai labour movement achieved some degree of unity. The organisations of workers’ collective action were controlled by the labour leaders so that the movement came under the domination of two strong national labour centres. The movement organisations comprised two types of organisations: the formal organisations, formed in accordance with the labour laws, and the informal organisations which were loosely formed to mobilise workers’ collective action.

3.4.1 The Formal Organisations: Employee Associations/ Trade Unions

The employee association had been the first form of the organisations of the workers’ collective action in the early 1970s before the workers were allowed to form trade unions. In 1972, the government introduced some new labour protection laws that allowed the workers to

form employee associations. This development was a consequence of domestic and international pressures on the government's industrial relations policy. As an internal factor, apart from unpopularity among the intellectuals, the government was also pressured by the increasing number of labour strikes and strong criticism from international labour organisations. The low wage and poor working conditions that was associated with the rapid industrial growth led to a growing unrest among the workers, although labour organisations were banned, the number of strikes had increased constantly since the second half of the 1960s (see table 5).

Table 5: Number of Strikes, 1956-1972

Year	Number of Strikes	Workers Involved	Mandate lost
1956	12	66	3,673
1957	21	203	12,947
1958	4	458	4,202
1959	11	846	8,060
1960	2	3	64
1961	2	68	93
1962	3	81	63
1963	4	118	159
1964	6	300	539
1965	17	3,753	6,566
1966	17	5,431	18,764
1967	2	470	470
1968	14	1,867	3,217
1969	18	5,345	23,593
1970	25	2,888	6,004
1971	27	5,153	12,646
1972	34	7,803	19,903

Source: Department of Labour, *Ministry of Interior Year Book of Labour Statistic, 1977*

In addition, in the late 1960s, some former labour activists of the 1950s, such as Suwit Raviwong, Sanan Wongsuthee and Vera Thanomleang began to organise the younger-generation workers through the training programs under the auspices of some international labour organisations, particularly, the Brotherhood of Asian Trade Unions (BATU). As a result, Vera Thanomleang could finally form a loose coordinating centre among the workers from 31 factories, namely "The Workers' Centre of Thailand (WCT)". This centre played an active role

in demanding the government to promulgate the new labour protection laws that allowed workers to form unions (Sungsidh Piriyaangsan 1989: 120-122).

In addition, the government was strongly criticized by international organisations. In the annual conferences of ILO during 1958-1972, the Thai government was constantly criticized by the representatives of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) for not promoting labour rights in the country (Lae Dilokvidhyarat 1983: 245).

In order to reduce the degree of labour dissatisfaction from both inside and outside the country, the government announced the Revolutionary Party Order No. 103 on March 16, 1972 in order to guarantee the minimum wage, over time pay, holiday leave, severance pay and the right to form employee associations. According to this announcement, the workers also had the rights of collective bargaining through their employee associations. However, the employee association must be formed on an enterprise base, and the workers' right to strike was severely limited. After submitting their demands, the workers had to wait at least 84-85 days until a strike was permitted. In addition, the dispute would have to be concluded with compulsory arbitration in order to avoid a labour strike.

In 1972, only nine employee associations were established in accordance with the Announcement No. 103. Two were state enterprise employees' associations and the other seven were private sector employees' associations. It was remarked that the leaders of some employee associations were the former leaders of the workers' movement in the 1950s such as the leaders of the Metropolitan Electricity Authority Workers' Associations, the Sea transport Workers' Association, and the Labour Association of Iron and Metal Industry (Sungsidh Piriyaangsan 1989: 97). However, it was after the October 1973 uprising that a large number of workers became active in forming labour organisations and the new generation of labour leaders played an important role in the workers' movement.

The new Labour Relations Act was promulgated on March 29, 1975. Under this Act, the employees in the private sector and the state enterprises, for the first time since 1958, had full union rights. The company-based trade unions were thus formed to replace the industrial-based employee association in the collective bargaining. From the end of 1973 to 1976, the number of labour organisations had increased sharply. Apart from the growing number of employee associations, another

important phenomenon was the formation of coordinating organisations among these associations.

Table 6: Number of Employee Associations/Trade Unions in 1972-1976

Year	State Enterprise	Private Enterprise	Total	Members
1972	2	7	9	na
1973	4	18	22	na
1974	11	34	45	50,000
1975	28	83	111	70,483
1976	49	135		na

Notes: 1. From 1972-1974, the statistics represent the number of employee associations.

2. Since 1975, the statistics have represented the number of trade unions

Sources: Labour Relation Division, Department of Labour, *Year Book of Labour Statistics 1983*

3.4.2 The Formation of National Labour Centres

The formal organisations, employee associations and trade unions, mobilised the workers' collective action at the workplaces and industrial level. However, at the national level, these organisations formed themselves as the national labour centres to lead the workers' collective action. During 1974-1976, there were two important national labour centres, the Trade Union Group of Thailand (TUGT) and the Labour Coordination Centre of Thailand (LCCT).

The TUGT evolved from the coordination organisation of the employee association. By mid- 1973, sixteen employee associations in both private and state enterprises began to form a loose coordinating centre under the auspices of the government Department of Labour (Arom Pongpangan 1979: 88). As the number of employee associations increased drastically in 1974, this labour centre became established as the first coordination organisation of the employee associations, under the name of the Labour Association of Thailand (LAT).

In 1975, after the enactment of the 1975 Labour Relations Act in March, workers in private companies began to form their own company-based unions to replace the industrial- based employee associations.

Subsequently, the LAT was transformed into the Trade Union Group of Thailand (TUGT). The Department of Labour still promoted the TUGT in several ways such as: to facilitate its member meetings and gave the TUGT financial support for the holding of May Day celebrations. In 1976, with the increasing influence, the TUGT changed its name to the Labour Congress of Thailand.

While the LAT/TUGT was a coordination organisation of employee associations/trade unions, which had been officially recognized by the state, there was an emergence of the other labour centre which was more political orientated than the TUGT. It was the Labour Coordination Centre of Thailand (LCCT- ศูนย์ประสานงานกรรมกรแห่งประเทศไทย)*.

The LCCT was not an autonomous labour centre but a combined organisation of workers and students. When it was formed in 1974, the membership of the LCCT was claimed to be 11 employee associations of private enterprise employees and one student organisation. However, the really organisations that dominated the LCCT were the Labour Association of Hotels and Hostels (LAHH), the Labour Association of Textile Industry in Samut Sakorn (LATS), and the Federation of Independent Students of Thailand (FIST). Therdphume Chaidee from the LAHH was elected as the first president of the LCCT, while Prasit Chaiyo from the LATS and Seksarn Prasertkul, a former important student leader of the October 14, 1973 incident, from the FIST, were elected as vice president and general secretary respectively (Sawalux Chaythawee 1990: 141). The LCCT manage to exist as an important leading labour organisation only around one year before it gradually declined in late 1975.

The declining influences of the LCCT on the labour movement were caused mainly by the state powers that threatened its leaders and sympathizers. The failure of the LCCT in leading the second Dusit Thanee strike in mid- 1975, followed by an attempt to kill Therdphume led the LCCT into a trouble situation. Being afraid of violent threats, the above three important leaders of the LCCT decided to leave the LCT and joined the CPT in the jungle. However, a particular event that had a devastating impact on the LCCT came in May 1976. The polices arrested five workers of the Thai Technique Industry Company in Omnoi (Samuthsakorn Province), and the other five student activists who were

* In 1975, the LCCT changed its name to the National Labour Coordinating Centre(ศูนย์ประสานงานกรรมกรแห่งชาติ).

the advisors of the LATS. Both groups were charged with destruction of national security, engaging in communist activity and possession of illegal firearms (Kriengsak Chetpatanawanich 1998: 351)*.

3.5 Individual Strikes and Wage Demands: The Defense of the Workers' Common Interests

The development of industrialisation since the 1960s increased the labour force in both manufacturing and service sectors. The formation of labour organisations, which evolved to modern trade unions, was the response to the modern industrial relations conflict between capitalist and labour that came along with the new industrial disciplines. However, in the early development of the trade union movement, the industrial working class was a minority of the labour force. Up to 1976, the proportions of wage earners in the non-agricultural sector had been less than 35 percent of the labour force, while the majority was still working in the agricultural sector (see table 7). While the working class in both manufacturing and service sectors was a minority of the labour force in the 1970s, unions' members also constituted as a tiny minority of wage earners. In 1976, the proportion of unionised workers was only 2.28% of the total employees (calculated from table 4 and 6).

Table 7: Employed Persons as the Percentage of Labour Force in 1971-1976

Year	Labour Force	Percentage of Employed Persons	
		In Agriculture	In Non- Agriculture
1971	16,653,920	79.2	20.8
1972	16,214,960	72.3	27.7
1973	17,116,550	72.1	27.9
1974	17,231,640	65.6	34.4
1975	18,255,190	73.1	26.9
1976	18,565,540	76.0	24.0

Source: Calculated from table 3

The trade union movement in the early 1970s developed from the individual strikes of workers who demanded wage increases and better employment conditions. The strikes took place often in both the private companies and state enterprises. During the three- year periods of open

* On August 15, 1979 these activists were released after they had been imprisoned for 3 years and 5 months.

politics from 1973- 1976, labour unrest and the number of strikes increased drastically. In 1973 there were 501 strikes, with nearly 178,000 workers involved, 73 per cent of these strikes occurred in the period after the October 14, 1973 uprising. (see table 8). The demands made by workers during 1973-1975 were mostly related to wages, working conditions, labour law, welfare and fringe benefit issues (Suvith Yingwaraphan 1977: 16).

Table 8: Strikes in 1973-1976

Year	Number of Strikes	Workers Involved	Mandays Lost
1973	501	177,887	296,887
(Jan 1- Oct 14)	(134)		
(Oct 14- Dec 31)	(367)		
1974	357	105,883	507,607
1975	241	94,747	722,946
1976	133	65,342	495,619

Source: Department of Labour, Ministry of Interior, *Year Book of Labour Statistics 1983*

In the 1970s, three groups of wage earners in Thailand, namely, private enterprise employees, state enterprise employees, and government administration employees, did not have the same labour rights. In 1972 the employees of both private and state enterprises had the rights of collective bargaining through their employee associations or trade unions while those of the government administrations never have these rights. In comparison, the wage rates of these three types of employees increased differently during 1974- 1982. This difference was caused by the role of labour organizations, which fought to strive for higher wages and better working conditions during that period.

For private enterprise workers, after the first enforcement of the minimum wage law in 1973, employee associations and trade unions played a key role to pressure the National Wage Committee to increase minimum wages annually. In 1974, the increasing of minimum wage was one of the demands put forward by the general strike of the textile workers, which resulted in the rise of the minimum wage from 16 Baht in January, 1974, to 20 Baht and 25 Baht in June, 1974 and January, 1975 respectively (see table 9).

Table 9: Proclaimed Minimum Daily Wage Rates 1973- 1975

No	Effective Date	Daily Wage (Baht)	Percentage Change	Enforcement Provinces
1	17 June 1973	12	-	Bangkok, Samut Prakarn, Nontaburi, Pathum Thani
2	1 January 1974	16	33.3	Bangkok, Samut Prakarn, Nontaburi, Pathum Thani
3	14 June 1974	20	25.0	Bangkok, Samut Prakarn, Nontaburi, Pathum Thani, Samut Sakorn, Nakorn Pathom
4	1 October 1974	16 18		Provinces in the North and Northeast(excluding Ubol Ratcha Thani, Khon Kaen, Udon Thani and Nakorn Ratchasima) Provinces in the Central and the South and 4 Provinces in the Northeast
5	16 January 1975	25	25.0	Bangkok and 5 nearby Provinces (Samut Prakarn, Nontaburi, Pathum Thani, Samut Sakorn, Nakorn Pathom)

Source: NESDB, *Fact Book on Labour, Employment, Salaries and Wages*, pp. 45-47

However, these proclaimed minimum wage rates were not available in all establishments. As the government had inadequate officers to inspect the factories, a number of employers, particularly in small- scale enterprises, tended to practice the illegal provision of minimum wages. It was in those establishments where trade unions existed that the workers were guaranteed to receive minimum wage.

For state enterprise workers, in 1974 the standard salaries of state enterprise employees and those of the government administration employees were the same. However, after 1974 the salaries of these two groups changed differently. The salaries of state enterprise employees were significantly higher than those of the government employees (see table 10).

It was obvious that the state enterprise employee associations had actively demanded increased living allowances. In October 1974, after the government had increased living allowances for some state enterprises that had profits, 14 associations of state enterprise employees joined together to demand a raise of living allowances for the employees of the enterprises that suffered losses. The government finally accepted their

demands. After 1974, state enterprise employee associations, which transferred into trade unions, retained their roles in fighting for increased wages and working benefits. On the contrary, government employees' salaries were determined absolutely by the government.

Table 10: Standard Salaries of Junior Government Employees and State Enterprise Employees, 1974-1982(selected years)

Step	1974		1978		1982	
	Gov. Em.	State. Em.	Gov. Em.	State. Em.	Gov. Em.	State. Em.
1	750	750	900	1,350	1,225	1,600
2	800	800	950	1,450	1,325	1,720
3	850	850	1,000	1,570	1,395	1,850
4	900	900	1,050	1,700	1,470	2,000
5	955	955	1,110	1,850	1,545	2,170
6	1,015	1,015	1,165	2,020	1,620	2,360
7	1,060	1,060	1,220	2,190	1,695	2,560
8	1,150	1,150	1,280	2,380	1,780	2,780
9	1,220	1,220	1,340	2,590	1,865	3,020
10	1,295	1,295	1,400	2,800	1,950	3,270

Sources: The Comptroller- General's Department, cited in NESDB, *Fact Book on Labour, Employment, Salaries, and Wages, August, 1984*

In addition, strikes in state enterprises in 1973-1976 were not only aimed for higher wages and working benefits, but also to demand for the improvement of administration and the elimination of corruption in the enterprises. Generally, wages and welfare of state enterprise employees were above those of the private enterprise workers. Their demands thus expanded to other issues such as workers' participation in the decision-making processes of the administration.

From the outset, most state enterprises were under military domination and control. Appointed military, police and high ranking civil officials constituted their executive boards. Such appointment was mainly a grant of political reward or reciprocity of political interests. Consequently, prerogatives of state enterprise management and corruption committed directly by the management themselves or jointly with their private business companies were important problems of state enterprises. However, the several months, immediately after the October 14, 1973 uprising, saw a number of strikes in state enterprises led by the employee associations to protest against this tradition. The following are instances of strikes in state enterprises in which the employees voiced

their demands against immoral practices in the state enterprise management system.

- A strike of the Metropolitan Waterworks Authority (MWA) employees on November 21, 1973 to protest against the appointment of an ex- Minister of the Thanom- Prapass government as a new Director of the MWA (Working group of APF 1990: 75).

- A strike of 3,000 workers of the Telephone Organisation of Thailand to protest against the prerogatives of state enterprise management burst out on November 20, 1973. The workers demanded for an abolition of high ranking army officials' prerogatives such as: repeal of special bonus for the executive ranks, prohibition of private use of the enterprise's transport, and termination of some advisors who did not work for the benefits of the enterprise (*Daily News*, November 21, 1973).

- Other strikes organised to protest against corruption in state enterprises, such as a strike of the employees of the Defense Ministry's Weaving Mill in November 1973, and a strike of the employees of the Glass Organisation on December 14, 1973(Sungsidh Piriyarangsan 1988: 70).

Increasing strikes in this period were caused by two main factors. First, strikes were prompted to a large extent by the political uprising of October 1973. This event was an obvious manifestation of the power of collective action that showed what could be accomplished, and released pressures that had been accumulating for over a decade. After October 1973, each social class in Thai society began to act collectively to protect their common interests. The capitalists formed their own political parties to occupy state power while the workers formed their organisations to exercise their collective bargaining powers for better wages and labour rights.

Second, strikes were the workers' response to their hardship caused by economic crisis. During 1973-1974, the country suffered severely from the world oil crisis, which resulted from the OPEC's increases of oil prices. The prices of domestic products reflected the higher costs of materials due to increasing oil prices. As prices for food, which constituted the major part of workers' expenditures, rose rapidly, industrial workers who had previously accepted low wages began to demand wage increases. In addition, in 1974 the economy began to falter and the trend of growing unemployment followed. Faced with declining real incomes and job insecurity, workers responded with strikes and demonstrations.

3.5.1 The Development from Individual Strikes to Class Collective Action

In this study, class collective action means, individuals who share a common socio-economic location in the employment structure recognize their common interests, not as an isolated group, but as a class. They thus organise collective action, in opposition to other classes or the state, in order to fight for their class interests. For the workers' movement in 1973-1976, a number of strikes and demonstrations were not actions staged by isolated groups at individual workplaces, but collective action which came under national organisations that mobilised wide support from workers and trade unions across the factory boundary, hence the action became the workers' class collective movement. When the workers formed their collective action as a class, they often confronted their employers who also coordinated with other employers as a capitalist block to react against the workers' demands. Many cases of disputes between employees and employers in 1975-1976 were class confrontations rather than collective bargaining of two partners in individual workplaces. In some cases the confrontation became the conflicts between the workers and the state, when the workers' demands were developed from work-related issues to political dimensions.

It was after the October 14, 1973 student-led uprising that the workers' movement began to reach a new quality when labour organisations aimed at class interests as a labour movement. In private sector enterprises, it was found that workers in textile and hotel industries played the most active role in staging strikes to demand for wage increases. The growth of these two industries in the early 1970s was a consequence of the development of modern industrialisation in Thailand. In 1974-1975, strikes of textile and hotel workers occurred frequently and the class collective action was also mobilised by the national labour centres to support these strikes.

- The Formation of Class Collective Action in the General Strike of Textile Workers

Since the early 1970s the textile industry had experienced a remarkable development, and could successfully change its character from an import-substitution industry to an export-oriented industry. During 1973-1975, the export value of textiles and garments increased sharply which also resulted in the large expansion of employees in this

industry. The expansion of the textile industry in the early 1970s was brought about by two major factors (Suehiro 1983: 8).

First, government policies which aimed at promoting local manufacturers, and raising import duty on textile goods contributed to the growth of the textile industry. The other important factor is an active introduction of foreign capital, in particular Japanese capital. This is partly because of the privileges given to foreign investors and partly because the Japanese firms attempted to shift their activity from export to local productions in order to escape the higher tariff barrier. As a result, in 1972 only 22 textile firms were owned by local capitalists while the other 22 and 10 firms belonged to Japanese and other foreign firms respectively (Suehiro 1983: Appendix, table 16).

However, in 1974, the oil crisis and world- wide depression seriously affected the Thai economy and led to the textile crisis, because of cotton shortages and the increasing price of cotton. In addition, the situation of textile- product exporting in Thailand got worse because of price cutting competition from other countries in Asia, such as Japan and Taiwan (Sungsidh Piriyarangsarn 1989: 145). As a result, the Textile Manufacturing Association of Thailand (TMAT), the textile employer association comprising members from 24 large textile firms, demanded the government reduce import duties on textile materials.

When its demand had failed, the TMAT imposed a production cut of 25% in 800 textile factories where 4,000 workers were employed (*Thairat* June 2, 1974: 1). As this policy would lead to the lay- off of a large number of workers, it had been strongly resisted by the textile labour associations. The protest against the TMAT's policy was started by a demonstration of 6,000 textile workers in Samut Sakorn and Nakorn Prathom provinces, led by the Labour Association of Textile Industry in Samut Sakorn. However, when the demonstration developed to a general strike of around 20,000-30,000 textile workers from the provinces near Bangkok. The strike was supported by the newly established Labour Association of Thailand (LAT), and other organisations outside labour*.

* These organisations were the NSCT, the People for Democracy Group, the Federation of Independent Students of Thailand, and the Socialist Party of Thailand (Chirakarn Sa-nguanpuag 1995: 121).

It should be remarked that at the beginning of the strike, the textile workers were concerned only about the layoff issues, which were their immediate problem. But when the strike went on, the workers' aim was developed to include the demands for increased minimum wages, the revision of labour laws, and the requirement for worker participation in the inspection of working conditions. These seven demands were presented to the Director- General of the Department of Labour on June 9, 1974 (Sungsidh Piriyaangsan 1989: 146-147).

1. Although the production was cut down, the employers must not dismiss the workers.
2. The management must allow the Labour Association of Textile Industry in Samut Sakorn (LTIS) representatives to join in investigating process when a case of worker default appeared.
- 3 The government must authorize a committee or representatives of the LATS to inspect working conditions in the textile factories.
4. The government must increase minimum wage from 16 baht to 25 baht.
5. The government must amend item 49 in provision 9 of the labour law that the dismissed workers would be eligible for compensation.
6. The employers must pay wages to the strikers for the period of the strike.
7. The government must amend Announcement No. 103 to allow the workers to have union rights and could participate in political activity freely.

The strike lasted five days and ended on June 15, 1974 when the government accepted the workers' demands on economic issues and the revision of the labour laws, but left the other demands to the decision of employers in individual companies. The final collective agreement was signed between the Prime Minister and the representatives of the workers, Prasit Chaiyo and Therdphum Chaidee, who were then presidents of the Labour Association of the Textile Industries in Samutsakorn (LATS) and of the Labour Association of Hotels and Hostels (LAHH) respectively, as follows (Samrej Zeepongsekul 1987: 123).

1. The minimum wage would be increased to 20 baht per day for 6 provinces including Bangkok, Samut Prakarn, Nonthaburi, Pathumthani, Samut Sakorn, and Nakorn Pathom.

2. The compensation payment laws would be revised.
3. The demand to involve worker representatives in factory inspection system would be negotiated directly to the employers in individual establishments.
4. The lay-off problems and reductions of wages in certain textile companies due to production cut backs would be solved case by case.
5. The role of the LATS in the investigation of workers' default would have to be arranged with the Labour Relations Committee*.
6. Wage payment during the strike would have to be arranged by the Department of Labour in consultation with the employers in individual companies.

This strike was the most crucial event in the turning period of the development of the Thai labour movement. Firstly, the workers learned to build up collective action across the factory boundary. Although the number of strikes increased sharply from 1972 to 1973 all of them were strikes at the workplace level. The textile workers' strike was different from those strikes since it did not start from the immediate interests of a particular group of workers such as wage or working conditions in certain establishments, but aimed to fight for the immediate common interests of the textile workers, to solve the lay-off problems. This strike could therefore motivate the largest number of textile workers from many companies and develop the actions of individual labour organisations to collective actions as a labour movement.

Secondly, the leading organisations of the strike could also develop their demands from the immediate common interests of the textile workers to the common interests of the working class as a whole. This development led the strike to be not only the struggle for the interests of particular worker groups, but the movement for the working class interests. However, it should be emphasized that the expansion of workers' demands to the issues of minimum wages, labour laws, and workers' participation in factory inspecting system was not initiated by the Labour Association of Thailand (LAT) but the Labour Association of Textile Industry in Samut Sakorn(LATS). It was remarked that when these demands were set up by the LATS, some leaders of the LAT disagreed with these new demands and tried to convince the strikers to go

* The Labour Relations Committee (LRC) was a tripartite organisation authorized by Article 24 of the Interior Ministry Announcement of the Labour Relations Committee on April 16, 1972 in order to arbitrate labour disputes.

back to work after the employers had promised to stop lay-off the textile workers. However, the leaders of the LATS and LAHH continued to led the strike arguing that the aims of the strike were no longer limited to the interests of the textile workers but extended to the demands for the benefits of general workers (Chirakarn Sa-nguanpuag 1995: 122). This conflict among the leaders of the LAT also led to a forming of another labour coordinating centre after the strike.

Finally, this strike also resulted in the development of an alliance between militant worker leaders and student activists who had actively supported the workers since the beginning of the strike. This group of workers and students later formed the Labour Coordinating Centre of Thailand (LCCT) in late 1974, as discussed above.

- Class Collective Action in the Strikes of the Hotel Workers

While the workers established national labour centres and formed a coordination in the labour strikes, the employers also began to develop their tactics in response to the unions' demands and action. During 1975-1976, a number of employers had no longer acted individually in facing the labour strikes, but formed a coordination to support each other for defeating the workers. In addition, some new tactics of industrial relations, the use of violence and strike- breakers, were introduced to react against the workers during the strikes. As a result, confrontation between the workers who acted as a class and the employers who also coordinated as a group was inevitable. This confrontation first appeared in the strikes of the hotel workers.

In the early 1970s, the tourist industry became one of the country's major sources of income. The increasing number of foreign tourists led to the expansion of the hotel industry in Bangkok as well as the growth of employees working in these hotels. Although working in superior and first- class hotels, a number of workers received wages below the legal minimum wage rate. Strikes in the hotel industry during this period were therefore aimed at raising wages and improving working conditions.

The only employee association of hotel workers was founded when the employees of 8 superior and first- class hotels and one hostel in

Bangkok* formed the Labour Association of Hotels and Hostels (LAHH) on March 23, 1973 (Somsak, Sriprapha, and Akorn 1988: 9-10). The President of the LAHH was Thirdphume Chaidee from the Sheraton Hotel who later became the President of the LCCT. During 1974-1975, the LAHH was very active in supporting strikes of workers in hotel industries. Some of these important strikes were the cases of the Siam Intercontinental Hotel, the Narai Hotel, and the Dusit Thani Hotel.

The first case to be discussed is the strikes of the Siam Intercontinental Hotel workers in 1973 and 1974. The Siam Intercontinental is a superior-class hotel in the American-owned Intercontinental Hotel Corporation Network. In December 1973, the workers submitted 8 demands on the improving of wage and working conditions and the dismissal of three of the hotel management staffs. The workers staged a strike before they successfully achieved their demands.

However, the hotel management violated the collective agreement signed during the strike, especially on the issues of wage increases, bonus, and saving fund. This led the 550 employees to submit the new demands and stage the second strike on August 5, 1974. The workers' demands were related to working hours, maternity leave, compensation payment, increasing the wage to the legal minimum wage, and the removal of three Western executives within fifteen days. This strike lasted ten days before the workers could, again, achieve their demands (Somsak, Sriprapha, and Akorn 1988: 16-19).

The workers' success was caused partly because all the demands, with the exception of the demand to dismiss some senior managers, were the demands for employers to comply with the labour laws and the legal minimum wage. The other part was that the two strikes were not only the actions of isolated groups of workers but were also strongly supported by the LAHH.

Following the second strike of the Siam Intercontinental workers, another strike occurred at the Narai Hotel. The Narai is a first-class hotel in Bangkok owned by local capital. The workers' demands included raising the wage to the minimum wage rate, limiting working hours, having workers' representatives in process of decision for the punishment of employees, and dismissing of three executives. The strike took only one

* The leader of this hostel was Sa-nan Wongsuthee, a labour activist of the 1950s who played an important role in the trade union movement until the early 1980s.

day on August 21, 1974, with the support of the LAHH, before the management accepted all workers' demands.

The last case to be discussed is the two strikes of the Dusit Thanee Hotel in 1974 and 1975. The Dusit Thanee was another superior hotel in Bangkok owned by Thai capital. From September 3- 11, 1974 the workers went on strike after they had demanded increased wages and having workers' representatives in process of decision for the punishment of employees. During the strike the workers received moral and financial supports from the members of the LAHH in the other hotels, and workers from other industries. In addition, Seksan Prasertkul, a former leader of the October 14, 1973 incident, who became the General Secretary of the LCCT, also led a group of student activists to support the workers in the strike.

At the same time, the management of other hotels in Bangkok expressed their support for the owner of the Dusit Thanee Hotel by offering the temporary transfer of the hotel's customers to their hotels (Sungsidh 1989: 155). This strike was therefore viewed as the first labour-management confrontation, which could gain wide public attention (Morell and Chai-anan 1981: 1969). Finally, the Minister of Interior ordered the Labour Relation Committee (LRC) to decide the dispute. The strike ended with worker's victory when the LRC decided in favor of the employees.

However, the second strike of the Dusit Thanee Hotel Workers came in May 1975. After the new minimum wage rate of unskilled workers in Bangkok was announced on October 1, 1974, the Dusit Thanee workers still received the old wage which was below the new minimum wage. As a result, on April 7, 1975 the workers submitted demands to the management for an increased wage, living allowance, leave days, and group insurance. The management rejected all the workers' demands without negotiation. Subsequently, the workers went on strike on May 1, 1975.

In reaction, the management dismissed 115 strikers and recruited new employees to replace the dismissed workers. By this tactic, other strikers who had not been dismissed began to leave the strike and return to work. In addition, the management employed another tactic by using

the Red Guar Group (กลุ่มกระทิงแดง) * to guard the hotel building during the dispute. Finally, the strike ended with the workers' defeat when it was declared illegal by the Interior Minister because the workers had violated the one-year collective agreement signed after the first strike in 1974. The management claimed that, according to this collective agreement, the wage rate must be effective at least one year from the signed date regardless of the new legal minimum wage. Since the collective agreement did not terminate until September 1975, the strike, which demanded an increased wage therefore violated the collective agreement. The second Dusit Thanee strike was the last strike in the hotel industry. After the enactment of the Labour Relations Act in March 1975, the members of the LAHH began to form their own company-based unions and have not staged any more strikes.

That the Dusit Thanee workers' failure in the second strike was criticized for its bad strike tactics, which were dominated by student activists. The students, indeed, did not know the real labour situation, workers' needs, and tactics of collective bargaining. They, therefore, made excessive demands and led the workers into an illegal strike (Nibhond Puapongsakorn 1987: 83). There were some phenomena that supported this assertion. The strike was under the leadership of the LAHH, which had very close relations with the LCCT. Thirdpume Chaidee, the President of the LAHH, was also then the President of the LCCT. In addition, the LAHH shared an office with the LCCT (Somsak, Sriprapha, and Akorn 1988: 16-19). As the LCCT was dominated by student activists, it was believed that the determination of strike tactics was much influenced by those student activists.

However, the influence of the students on the strike tactic could be only one factor which affected the workers' failure. The workers' defeat was also caused by another important factor. The Dusit Thanee strike was the first case in which the employer used a violent confrontation and a strict requirement of the labour law to defeat the strike. During 1972-1974, most of the labour strikes were illegal, but the workers, however, could successfully, or partly, achieve their demands. The workers' success was caused partly because the employers were defensive in response to the strikes. Since 1975, the situation had changed when the

* By mid- 1975, some anti-student movement groups were formed, the most important ones being the Ninth Power, the Red Guars, and the Village Scout. It was pointed out that these organisations were devised by the powerful elite in order to counter student political powers, and to destroy the emerging coalition of peasants, workers, and students (Morell and Chai-anan 1981: 236).

employers began to use a pro-active strategy to confront the workers during the strikes. This strategy was characterized by the use of violence against the strikers, the introduction of strike-breaker tactics, and the strict interpretation of labour laws.

- Confrontation and Class Collective Action in Two Strikes of the Textile Workers

After the Dusit Thanee strike ended, the new industrial relations tactics were widely practiced, violence and strike-breakers were introduced by employers as an instrument to defeat the workers. While the Dusit Thanee workers were going on strike in May 1975, the female workers at the Standard Garment Company, a garment firm in Bangkok, also staged a strike. The strike occurred on May 3, 1975 after the management had dismissed 11 workers' representatives, who prepared to submit 16 demands, including minimum wage and welfare issues. This strike was under the leadership of Prasit Chaiyo the Vice-President of the LCCT.

While collective agreement had not yet been reached, the employer used a new tactic to break the strike by offering the workers the chance to return to work regardless of the negotiations between the two sides. As a result, a number of workers decided to leave the strike and go back to work (Chirakarn Sa-nguanpuag 1995: 123-124). Subsequently, on May 28, 1975, a violent clash occurred between the police and the strikers, when 130 strike breakers arrived at the factory under the protection of over 200 police and faced resistance from the strikers. Consequently, a number of female strikers clashed with the police and suffered injuries.

After this violence occurred, the TUGT, three socialist political parties, and the NSCT took actions to support the strikers. The immediate economic demands of the workers were transformed into a political dimension when new demands were set up to pressure the government to dismiss the police colonel who ordered the use of violence against the strike; to guarantee a non-violent policy in the settlement of labour disputes and; to removal the Red Guards from the Dusit Thani Hotel (Samrej Zeepongsekul 1987:132). In order to achieve the demands, the TUGT and the LCCT organised a four-day rally at Lumpini Park on June 3- 7, 1975. The movement ended when the government agreed to pay compensation for injured workers and guaranteed that there would be no more violence against the workers' strikes.

Confrontation between workers and management, without compromise, tended to be the general case in strikes during 1975-1976. Another example was the case of the strike at the Hara Blue Jeans Company in late 1975. The strike of the Hara Blue Jeans workers was one of the best-known strikes in this period. The Hara Blue Jeans Company was a garment firm owned by a local capitalist producing jeans clothes under the label "Hara". In 1975, the company had seven factories, four were located in Thailand and the other three were in Singapore, Malaysia, and Hong Kong (Napaporn Ativanichayapong 1999: 109). In Thailand, three factories were operated in Bangkok and the other one was in Omyai, Nakornpathom Province.

On October 2, 1975, the female workers in two factories at Omyai and Bangkok plants submitted demands for wage increases and welfare-improvement. The employer refused the workers' demands, dismissed 7 workers' representatives, and locked-out the factories (Chirakarn Sanguanpuag 1995: 132). In reaction, the workers declared a strike and seized the factory at Soi Wad Phai Nguen, Bangkok, to operate the production by themselves. The workers also changed the name of the factory to "Workers' Solidarity Factory". The Factory's shares were distributed to workers' sympathizers in order to raise money for buying materials and equipment (Wanna Aussawasuchoti 1987: 15-18).

The workers also disclosed the data about the costs of the Hara Jeans products, including materials and labour costs, which were 3-6 times lower than the selling prices in the market (*Prachachart Weekly* 1976: 29). This data was published in order to show the public that the Hara Company had made extremely high profits from its' productions by exploiting the workers. The workers were widely supported by the LCCT and the TUGT, the NSCT, and the Socialist Party of Thailand.

The student activists helped the workers to sell their products at much lower prices than they had been sold in the market. In addition, the students organised a "Workers' School" to teach political knowledge to the workers who were working at the Workers' Solidarity Factory. The workers could operate the factory for almost three months before it was closed on March 12, 1976, by the order of the Minister of Interior.

Although the workers' occupation of the factory was a radical form of labour resistance, this action was a strike tactic to respond to the employer's confrontation strategy that could not simply be claimed to be a movement towards the Marxist proletarian revolution. The Hara strike was under the leadership of the LATS and the LCCT, whose leaders had

close relations with student activists. Since the employer ignored all the workers' demands and locked-out the factories, the strike had been protracted for more than three months. During this period, the workers did not have any income. The idea to occupy the factory and operate the production by the workers was therefore initiated by the student activists in order to help the workers to survive and enable them to continue their strike.*

3.5.2 Causes and Implications of Class Collective Action

The development of the forms of workers' collective action from isolated strikes at individual workplaces to class collective action was caused by several conditions.

First, the structure of movement organisations, which comprised industrial- based organisations and national labour centres, enabled the workers to form class collective action across the factory boundary. However, these organisations would not be effective in mobilising class collective action, if they did not represent the interests of the working class. During 1972-1973, the employee associations and national labour centres had developed their functions as the genuine representatives of the workers, and hence led the class collective action.

At the industrial level, two employee associations, LTAS and LAHH, in the textile industry and hotel industry, were the most active organisations among the employee associations. They expanded the collective action of the workers at the workplace to industrial level by mobilising support from the workers in the same industry when a strike took place. However, the class collective action had not taken place until the national labour organisations were included in the leadership structure and mobilised wider support across the industries.

At national level, two organisations, the LCCT and the TUGT/LCT, could mobilise support from the workers across industry and sometimes they gained support across class, from the students and other sympathisers. The movement came under the leadership of these two organisations, also because of unity among the leaders of the national labour organisations.

* Interview with Thienchai Wongchaisuwan and Pitthaya Wongkul, former student activists who worked with the LCCT in 1975-1976 on January 12, 2001.

Second, class collective action was a product of industrial relations conflicts. In 1972-1974, when the management used a compromising and defensive strategy to respond to workers' demands, it was found that strike activities were limited within the workplaces and did not expand to be a class movement. But in 1975-1976, when the management had used a pro-active strategy to respond the unions' demands, the individual trade unions needed to seek support from other trade unions or other organisations apart from labour. Strike activities also had been prolonged and became the collective actions of trade unions as a class. In some specific situations such immediate economic demands were transformed into a political dimension and the form of the labour resistance was changed to a more militant one, such as the seizure of the factory.

However, the workers' class collective action led by trade unions in this period did not imply that trade union movement became a Marxist revolutionary movement. As Alain Touraine pointed out, there is no organic link between class-consciousness and revolution (Touraine 1986: 153). The workers' class collective action was the product of industrial relations problems, but did not stem from the revolutionary consciousness. Although some labour leaders were influenced by the socialist ideology, the majority of the union actors learned to act as a class from their experiences on industrial relations conflict under the leadership of national labour organisations. Consequently, the aims of the class collective action were limited to the defense of the workers' common interests within the existing social conditions rather than to aim radically at transforming the foundations of the entire society.

3.6 Political Activism and Ideological Orientation of Trade Union Actors

Another notable feature of the trade union movement during 1972-1976, is the involvement of the organised workers in the movements for political purposes. During this period, the trade unions did not only mobilise class collective action to defend their particular interests, but also lead their members to participate in the political movement. The political activism of the trade unions was encouraged partly by the unprecedentedly democratic climate in the aftermath of the October 14, 1973 uprising. At the same time, the student movement and the widespread socialist ideology were the factors that had greatly influenced how the unions defined their broad social objectives.

Since 1974, the students had expressed their support to workers and peasants' movements and at the same time encouraged labour and

peasant leaders to participate in political demonstrations. It was in mid-1975 that the NSCT announced a formal cooperation of these three social forces. On May 1, 1975, the LCCT and the NSCT organised a May Day celebration at Thammasat University, accompanied by the members of the PFT. On the following day, 800 farmers from 23 provinces came to Bangkok demanding the government resolve their problems. Prime Minister Kukrit Pramot refused all the peasants' demands, claiming that the House of Representatives was not in session so the government had to wait until the House opened before it could make any decisions. The students, workers, and peasants, therefore, announced the establishment of "Tripartite Alliance" (กลุ่ม 3 ประสาน) in order to demand social justices, starting with the peasants' issues (Kriengsak Chetpatanawanich 1998:255). This type of political coalition, unprecedented in Thailand, was viewed by some state authorities as an alliance which looked like the basis for implementation of a communist strategy of inciting urban riots supported by an organized peasants' uprising (Morell and Chai-anan 1981: 160).

In fact, the coalition of workers, students, and peasants was a political tactic rather than an exact organisational strategy. The most significant impact of this coalition on the trade union movement was cooperation between workers and students, which became more obvious after the forming of the Tripartite Alliance. When labour organisations initiated a protest demonstration, rally, or strike, students participated, and when the NSCT launched the political campaigns, the LCCT and the TUGT led its members to join.

The role of organised workers in the political movement, during the period of building up a new democratic regime in 1973-1976, did not appear in the establishment of certain institutional forms, such as election, parliament, and political party, but could be seen in the politics out of the parliament. Unlike the situation in the 1950s, the labour leaders did not join the formation of a labour or socialist party*. The founders of the three socialist- oriented political parties, the Socialist Party of Thailand, the Socialist Front Party of Thailand, and the New Force Party were all middle- class intellectuals and politicians. It was, therefore, not surprising that when these three political parties could win 37 seats out of the total 269 in the election of 1975, workers had no representatives in the parliament (Morell and Chai-anan 1981: 113).

* Although the Labour Party was formed in 1975, the founders of this party were not workers. The President of the Labour Party in 1975-1976 was Sa-aud Piyawan, a merchant capitalist in the Northern Part.

Although they did not play a role in the development of the political institutions, the workers and their organisations were involved in the political movement outside the parliament. In 1974-1976, some groups of workers participated in political demonstrations led by the NSCT, which focused on two main issues, anti US imperialism and protesting against the return of former military dictators. By the late 1974, the student movement had become more radical. As discussed previously, although most students were pro- democracy actors, a number of student leaders claimed to be Marxist- Maoist and promoted anti-imperialist and anti- capitalist demonstrations. The anti- imperialist and anti- capitalist issues first appeared in the labour movement during the strike of textile workers in 1974, which involved workers from many textile firms owned jointly or fully by foreign capitals. During the workers' demonstration, the Japanese, American, and Taiwanese capitalists were cited as the actual cause of workers' poverty (Sungsidh Piriyanangsan 1989: 186).

The development of workers political consciousness on anti-imperialism and anti-capitalism was stimulated by their own experiences and by the student movement. During 1974-1976, most union actors had been involved in the militant strikes with the confrontation of labour-management. Their direct experiences had developed the workers' political concerns on anti- capitalism. While the unions' objective on anti-capitalist was confined to the workers' demand for a fair distribution of incomes between labour and capitalist, in production, anti-imperialism was not a relevant issue in the strikes during 1974-1976, which mostly were disputes between employers and employees at the firms owned by local capitalists. The workers' political consciousness on anti-imperialism was not developed directly by their experiences with workplace struggle, but was enhanced by the student movement.

During 1974-1976, the NSCT launched anti-imperialist campaigns reasoning that the Thai ruling elite class allied with the US imperialists and other foreign capitalists to exploit the country's natural resources and destroyed the nation's sovereignty. The campaigns involved some groups of workers, particularly the LCCT's members. The LCCT joined the NSCT in the protests against the exploitation of tin ore by an American Company, the Temco, in 1974-1975, and in the campaigns against the American military bases in Thailand in 1975-1976.

The other issue of political movement that could involve trade unions was the campaigns against the former dictatorship leaders. During 1974- 1976, two leaders of the former dictatorship made several attempts

to return to Thailand from exile. This situation led the NSCT to launch demonstrations against the two dictators. When Thanom Kittikachorn came back to Thailand from exile in late 1974, the LCCT joined with the NSCT as "The National Alliance of Anti-Dictatorship" to exhort the workers to protest against the return of Thanom (Sawalux Chaitawee 1990: 153). The alliance finally could expel Thanom from the country. However, in August 1976, General Praphas Charusathian, another leader of the former dictatorial government, also returned to Bangkok from exile, followed with Thanom, who came back again.

The return of Thanom and Praphas, who had been called "tyrants", undermined the political legitimacy of the October 14, 1973 incident. As a result, the Labour Congress of Thailand (LCT) called a meeting of all trade unions in order to discuss the case. The unions demanded the Prime Minister force Thanom and Praphas to leave the country. In addition, 43 trade unions, under the leadership of the LCT, threatened to call a general strike on October 11, 1976, if the government could not expel the two persons from the country (Napaporn Ativanichayapong 1999: 116). The NSCT organised a large demonstration at Thammasat University on October 5, 1976. Finally, the military leaders staged a coup d' e tat on October 6, 1976, in order to suppress the demonstrators, but later threatened the activists of all social movements, including the leaders of students, workers, and peasants.

As far as the trade union movement was concerned, the October 6, 1976 event did not bring about only an interruption to the development of the alliance between trade unions and students in the political movement, but also disclosed a new faction of trade unions, which was formed to counter the student- labour led political campaigns. Since late 1975, some TUGT leaders began to cooperate with powerful elites and declared themselves as a rightist wing in the labour movement (Arom Pongpangan 1979: 116-117). On October 5, 1976, one day before the military coup was staged, this group of TUGT leaders joined the rally with the Nine Power, and the Village Scouts, two rightist organisations formed to counter student political powers. They demanded that the arrest some leaders of the TUGT, claiming that those people were communists. The group was led by Thanong Laowanich, one of the twenty-two committee members of the TUGT.

The role of trade unions in the political movement in 1976 was therefore not characterised only by the involvement of trade unions in politics led by the student movement but was also represented by a small

faction of trade unions that joined the rightist wing to counter the student political power.

The unions' political and broad social objectives reflected the ideological orientations of union actors. It was obvious that during 1974-1976, the workers' involvement in the political movement and in the general strike of 1976 was under the leadership of two organisations, the LCCT and the TUGT. It is therefore important to examine the ideological orientation of the actors of these two organisations and the factors that influenced how union leaders defined their social objectives.

Compared with the TUGT, the LCCT was viewed as a radical wing of the Thai trade union movement, or a political oriented labour organisation, which aimed at more militance than the TUGT to transform society by changing the structure of social relations. The TUGT was seen as a non-political labour organisation whose strategy aimed at the improvement of working conditions and workers' status within the existing capitalist economy (see for examples, Sungsidh 1989: 204-220, and Morell and Chai-anan 1981: 190-192). These assertions arose out of some phenomena concerning the two organisations.

First, the LCCT leaders had close relations with the students, a most active political group and challengers of state powers in 1973-1976, while the TUGT was accepted by the Department of Labour as the official leading organisation of trade unions and received some support from the government.

Second, the prominent leaders of the TUGT such as Phisarn Thawatchaina and Arom Phongpangan expressed their attitudes in favor of trade unionism, while some leaders of the LCCT, such as Therdphume Chaidee, expressed their attitude towards the rejection of the existing capitalist social relations. It was therefore believed that the leaders of the LCCT did not see strikes, or even achievements of specific demands, as ends in themselves, but as a means to create lasting political power for the working class in order to reform Thai society (Morell and Chai-anan 1981:190). In addition, after the failure of the second strike of the Dusit Thanee workers in mid- 1975, followed by an attempt to assassinate Therdphum Chaidee, three important leaders of the LCCT, namely, Therdphum Chaidee, Seksan Prasertkul, and Prasit Chaiyo, left the LCCT to join the Communist Party of Thailand in the jungle.

As far as ideology was concerned, the TUGT was a heterogeneous labour group comprised of union actors whose political ideologies ranged

from left- leaning to rightist orientation. A variety of political attitudes among the leaders of the TUGT was one of the reasons why it was not dominated by student activists. In addition, most of the TUGT' s members were state enterprise unions and big unions in the private sector that had stronger organisations than the students could provide.

However, the differences in political ideologies of the actors of the LCCT and the TUGT did not cause a significant impact on the unity of the two organisations. Although the TUGT leaders did not have close relations with student activists as did the LCCT, the TUGT did not distance itself from the political movement led by the NSCT. The Thai trade union movement in 1974-1976 also achieved some degree of unity under the leadership of the LCCT and the TUGT. The two organisations did not compete with each other in leading the labour movement but together led the trade union movement. This assertion was evidenced by some phenomena, as follows.

On May 1, 1975, two May Day celebrations were organised by the TUGT and the LCCT. The TUGT organised a celebration at Lumpinee Park, which focused on entertainment issues, and was granted 200,000 Baht by the Department of Labour. The LCCT was supported by the NSCT to hold a celebration at Thammasat University, which contained expressly political contents (Sawalax Chaytaweeep 1990: 154). This event was usually mentioned as a result of conflicts among the leaders of the two organisations. However, the LCCT in fact did not withdraw the May Day celebration organised by the TUGT. The celebration at the Lumpinee Park involved 58 trade union members of the TUGT, including the members of the LAHH and the LATS, two most active members of the LCCT. Therdphume Chaidee, the President of both the LCCT and LAHH, was responsible for the exhibition section. This exhibition displayed some political and labour issues, such as workers' struggles for their own rights and the praise of the October 14, incident (Kanya Leelalai 1999: 266).

For another example, when the LCCT led the strikes of the Dusit Thanee and Standard Garment workers in May 1975 and was faced with violent reactions from the management and the police, the TUGT immediately joined the LCCT to organise a four- day rally to demand the government's admission of responsibility for the violence. In addition, after the LCCT's influences on the labour movement had declined since late 1975, the LCCT's members had joined the activities led by the TUGT, which became the only one leading organisation of trade unions. Consequently, two important trade union demonstrations in 1976, i.e. the

general strike in January and the May Day celebration on May 1 involved the largest number of workers of any period in the history of Thai trade union movement.

The unity of the LCCT and the TUGT in leading the trade union movement indicated that the difference in political ideology among the unions' leaders during that period did not lead to a fragmentation or weakness of the labour movement. The main reason is because both the LCCT and the TUGT had primary objectives of being the representative organisations of the working class, which aimed at providing and protecting the interests of the workers.

3.7. Trade Unions and the General Strike in 1976: A New Definition of Interest Representatives

The strike in January 1976 led by the TUGT is indeed the only one strike in the history of the Thai labour movement that could be called a “general strike”. This strike is considerably important partly because it could mobilise more than ten thousands workers and 70 unions from both private and state enterprises to participate in the strike. Furthermore, this strike was different from other strikes because it was not aimed to fight for the workers’ particular interests, but demanded benefits for the urban poor and the peasants. The former reason for its importance reflected the capacity and power of the trade unions in mobilising collective action. But the later showed the unions’ commitment to a wide definition of the interest representatives, in which the unions did not limit their role to collective bargaining for the working class’ interests, but presented themselves as the representatives of the underprivileged people from the multi-class.

The situation that led to this strike was the oil crisis in the early 1970s, which resulted in economic depression and high costs of living. In order to help the urban poor, the government introduced a policy of controlling the maximum price of rice at 50 Baht per thang (20litres). This control-price rice was sold under the management of the Department of Internal Trade and the Agricultural Market Authority. However, on December 2, 1975, Prime Minister Kukrit Pramot decided to abolish this policy and allowed the rice traders to increase the prices of rice to 65-75 Baht per thang. The government claimed that this policy would benefit the rice farmers because the increasing of the price of rice would raise the price of paddy. In addition, the government promised to guarantee the minimum price of paddy rice at 2,500 Baht per kwien (1,000 kilograms). Following the increased prices of rice, the price of sugar also rose.

At that time the TUGT, which became the most powerful leading organisation of trade unions after the decline of the LCCT in mid 1975, was preparing a plan to restructure its organisation in order to transform itself into a labour council. On December 21, 1975, the new executive Committee of the TUGT decided to protest against the government policy on raising prices of rice and sugar. This decision caused by two important reasons.

First, the TUGT believed that the increasing price of rice was useless for the farmers because at that time the farmers had already sold their paddy to the middlemen and, in the next selling, the government could not force the middlemen to buy paddy at the guaranteed price. In addition, the higher prices of rice would certainly affect the people's costs of living (Arom Pongpangan 1980: 101-102). Second, the leaders of the TUGT also saw that the movement on this issue would create an opportunity for them to build up solidarity among the trade union leaders (Narong Petprasert 1992: 125).

However, the TUGT leaders also realized that their demand might be diametrically opposed to the demand of the peasants. The TUGT therefore tried to compromise the interests of the people, including the workers, who demanded to buy rice at a low price and the farmers who needed to sell paddy at a high price. The TUGT submitted four demands that required the government not only to suspend the policy on increasing prices of rice and sugar but also to implement and to promote the policies that directly benefited the peasants as follows (*Prachachati Daily* January 7, 1976).

1. Guarantee the price of paddy, at least, at 2,500 baht per kwien as approved previously,
2. Postpone any further increase in the prices of sugar and rice for one year,
3. Immediately implement a land-reform program,
4. Promote and establish agricultural cooperatives throughout the country, and improve the efficiency of the Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives,

The negotiations between the TUGT and the government took place on December 24, 1975, but no agreement was reached. The TUGT thus called a meeting of all trade unions in the country and announced a general strike as the instrument to pressure the government. Because the above demands did not directly relate to the particular interests of the workers the TUGT leaders were not confident about their potential to

mobilise the workers to participate in this strike. They therefore used some tactics to ensure the success of the strike by starting the general strike from Friday January 2, 1976. December 31, 1975 and January 1, 1976 were New Year holidays. In addition, January 3-4 were weekend holidays. It was therefore not too difficult to convince the workers to involve themselves in the strike by not going to work on January 2 (Narong Petprasert 1992: 126).

The number of trade unions that joined the strike on January 2, 1976 was 54, including 19 major state enterprise unions and 35 private enterprise unions. These number increased to 70 on January 4 (Bandit and Piroj 1989: 150-151). On January 5, 1976 the TUGT put more pressure on the government by having 10,000 strikers rally in front of King Rama V Monument. Finally, the government accepted all the TUGT' four demands and the additional fifth demand which stated that the workers who participated in the strike would not be punished and be paid their wages for the strike period*.

In the collective agreement signed by Paisarn Thawatchainunt, the President of TUGT and Prime Minister Kukrit Pramot on January 6, 1976, a special committee was established in order to follow up the implementation of the policies on the guarantee of paddy price and the control of rice price. This committee was comprised of 20 members of 5 representatives each from workers (TUGT), farmers, students (NSCT), and the government (Arom Pongpangan 1979: 189-190).

After this general strike, the TUGT became the most powerful organisation of trade unions. This development was evidenced by several phenomena. First, the May Day celebration in 1976 was organised solely by the TUGT at the Lumpini Park. The LCT did not hold its own celebration as in previous years but joined with the TUGT (Arom Pongpangan 1988: 37-40). Second, during the May Day celebration, Phaisarn Thawatchainan announced that the executive committee of the TUGT decided to change the name of the organisation to " Labour Congress of Thailand (LCT- สภาแรงงานแห่งประเทศไทย). This announcement signified the TUGT's confidence as the genuine leading organisation of all trade unions in the country. Third, the increasing popularity of the

* According to the 1975 Labour Relations Act, this strike was illegal because the workers went on strike without any reason of labour dispute. The TUGT leaders argued that this strike was caused by a conflict between the people and the government but not by industrial relations conflict. It was thus not restricted by the labour laws(*Prachathippratai Daily*, January 3, 1976).

TUGT was also evidenced by the rise of its membership to 130 unions in mid- 1976 (Sawalux Chaythaweeep 1990: 163) when the total number of trade unions in the whole country was only 184 at the end of 1976(see table 7).

With the emphasis on the role of trade unionism as a social movement, this general strike is very important for at least two reasons. First, it is the only general strike in which the workers' demands did not directly relate to the common interests of the working class. Although the demand to suspend increasing prices of rice and sugar benefited the urban workers, this demand also affected all the urban poor, not the workers in particular. In addition, the other three demands did not relate to the workers' interests but directly benefited the peasants, who, at that time, were the majority of the country's population.

Second, according to a small number of organised workers and the weak bargaining power of these social forces in the past, labour organisations had been seen as a numerically limited force in Thai society. Since October 14, 1973, workers were seen as only an allied force of students in the political movement. It was only in this strike that trade unions could lead the movement on non- labour issues and successfully use their collective bargaining power, through the general strike, to achieve the demands for broader social interests. This strike had therefore changed the public attitude on unions, by which people began to recognize them as a powerful social force, which did not only fight for their own interests, but were also concerned with the interests of other classes.

3.8 Conclusions

In this chapter, the study indicated that the modern trade unions, which revived from the stagnation under the authoritarian rule in the 1960s, did not present themselves as only representatives of the interests of their members but also acted as a social movement. Trade unionism in 1972-1976 could reach a level of a social movement unionism by the integration of three components: defense of the common interests of the workers, class collective action, and participation in the movements for broad social objectives.

The formation of the social movement unions during this period was a consequence of an interaction between trade union movement and the other external factors: the economic conditions, the political opportunities, and other social movements. .

The economic development in Thailand towards industrialisation since the 1960s led to the increasing workforces in both manufacturing and service industries. Modern industrialisation also required an establishment of new industrial relation institutions, such as minimum wage system and labour laws. These new institutions had provided the minimum standards of labour rights for the wage earners. The unions' demands on wage increases, better working conditions and welfare did not reflect only their economic objectives, but also illustrated their concerns of legitimate labour rights. On one hand, the unions based their demands on the minimum standards stated by the labour laws. On the other hand, they attempted to raise these standards through the functions of the industrial relation institutions, such as a demand for an increase of minimum wage rate and for a revision of the labour laws.

The political situation in the aftermath of the October 14, 1973 uprising contributed to the enhancement of workers' sense of autonomy. In some strikes, the unions' demands were not limited to wage and working condition issues, but were expanded to cover the issues of workers' autonomy in the workplace. During 1974-1975, the state enterprise workers protested against the management's prerogatives and corruption. In the private sector, the workers' demands in the general strike of textile workers included the issue of workers' participation in the factory inspection process. In the strikes of the hotel workers, the workers also demanded participation in the employee-punishment process, and the dismissals of some management staff.

The success of the people's uprising on October 14, 1973, in overthrowing the authoritarian regime followed by the emerging democratic climate, had brought about the great change of people's attitude toward their political participation. Many people shifted from a sense of powerlessness to a belief in their own power. For workers in private enterprises, particularly in textile and hotel industries, where labour organisations formed a close cooperation with the most active political groups, the students, the sense of autonomy was more stimulated than in other enterprises. For state enterprise workers, the sense of autonomy in the workplace had developed rapidly. Since wages and welfare of state enterprise workers were above those of the private workers, it was not difficult for the labour leaders to expand the workers' demands to other issues that would raise up the workers' powers in the workplaces. This new social value was also caused by the relative deprivation of the state enterprise employees. As a democratic climate and social justice values emerged suddenly in Thai society after October 14, 1973, most state enterprise employees felt deprived when

they found that the management used the traditional styles to abuse the power for self-interests.

The development of ideological orientations of union actors towards political and broad social objectives was a result of the changes in workers' political attitude after the October 14, 1973 uprising. However, the students, as the most active political group, and the underground Communist Party of Thailand (CPT), also acted as catalysts for this development. The CPT did not get much success in their effort to work with the unions' leaders, but it could influence the student movement. Student activists could form close relations with the trade union movement by integrating themselves into the workers' movement under the leadership of labour-student led organisation, the LCCT. In addition, students acted as an opposition force to the powerful elite and organised a number of political demonstrations that could involve a large number of workers to participate in them.

According to Udehn, the critical mass is often middle-class, who typically consisted of persons rich in resources, while the passive mass often consisted of less resourceful persons from the lower class (Udehn 1996: 236). The October 14, 1973 people's uprising had converted the working class from the passive mass to the critical mass who acted collectively to defend their common interests and to participate in the movements for broad social objectives.

Lenin's concept of the role of intellectuals in transcending the economic consciousness of trade unions to political revolution (Lenin 1978: 31-32) is also effective to explain the characters of the trade union movement in 1974-1976. During this period, student activists and the cadres of the Communist Party of Thailand were the intellectuals that participated in the labour movement. They broadened the union actors' mentality towards the concerns of the social interests. In addition, some union leaders also accepted the revolutionary ideology, while the majority of trade union actors had trade union consciousness and social justice as their dominant ideology in leading the movement.

The trade unions during this period were thus defined as the social movement unions, in which social movement unionism means the integration of three components: defense of the common interests of the workers, class collective action, and participation in the movements for broad social interests.
