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The
CEYLON INDIAN CONGRESS

5/18

REPORT

of the

CEYLON INDIAN CONGRESS
COMMITTEE

FOR THE PERIOD

From 1st September 1940 to 31st December 1941

(Submitted at the Second Annual Sessions held
on 10th and 11th January, 1942 at Kandy)

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Report of the CEYLON INDIAN CONGRESS

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from 1st Sept. 1940 to 31st Dec. 1941.

1. The foundation of the Ceylon Indian Congress was laid by the great patriot and statesman Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru. The story of the foundation has been told in the last report of the Provisional Committee submitted at the Inaugural Sessions held on the 7th and 8th of September, 1940. It however behoves the Indians in Ceylon to ever keep green with grateful remembrance the debt of obligation which they owe to Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru. Such remembrance will be a potent factor to draw to the Ceylon Indian Congress the devotion and service of selfless men and leaders.

2. This report covers the period from September, 1940 to 31st December 1941; it is more than a year. There has been ample reason for the delay and the Committee trusts that the members will agree that the delay was justified. The official year of the Congress according to the constitution is from 1st January to 31st December and it is essential that the time of the Annual Sessions should be such as will enable the office bearers and committee to function as far as possible during an official year and submit their report for the year. Besides, the months August to November 1941 were months of anxious expectation and arduous work in connection with the Indo-Ceylon conferences which dealt with the most vital problems affecting Indians in Ceylon and every effort and thought had to be concentrated on those problems during those months to prevent the permanent impairment of our status.

Office-Bearers

3. Sri V. R. M. Letchuman Chettiar who was the President during the preliminary period was elected President in September 1940; but unfortunately his health compelled him early to resign from that office. The attempt of the Working Committee to persuade him to withdraw his resignation proved futile. Sri G. R. Motha who was elected as Joint Hony. Secretary with Janab A. Aziz at the Inaugural Sessions tendered his resignation early in October, 1940, but agreed at the request of the Working Committee to continue till 31st December, 1940. At a meeting of the Ceylon Indian Congress Committee held on 2nd March, 1941, Sri V. R. M. Letchuman Chettiar's resignation was accepted and Sri Peri Sundaram unanimously elected as President in his place. At the same meeting the Committee was gratified to learn that Sri G. R. Motha had been persuaded to withdraw his resignation. But Janab A. Aziz announced his intention of resigning at that meeting on the ground that his approach to the Indo-Ceylon problems differed from that of the President then elected, and the Committee accepted his resignation and unanimously elected Sri S. Somasundaram in his place. The Working Committee suffered an irreparable loss of one of the most selfless and energetic workers of the Congress by the death under tragic circumstances of Sri A. D. Gnanamanikam, the President of the Ratnapura District Committee. The vacancies in the Working Committee caused by the death of Sri A. D. Gnanamanikam, the election of Sri Peri Sundaram as President and the appointment of Sri S. Somasundaram as Secretary were filled by appointing Janab O. V. Kunhayan, Sri. C. K. Kunhیرaman and Janab A. Aziz. The Working Committee appointed Sri H. M. Desai as Overseas Secretary to keep contact with the Indian Public. No better selection is possible.

Working Committee Meetings

4. There were 21 meetings of the Working Committee of which 15 were held in Colombo and 6 in the up-country viz. 1 at Badulla, 2 at Nawalapitiya, 1 at Hatton, 1 at Gampola and

1 at Kandy. The attendance of the members was fairly satisfactory, a schedule shewing the number of meetings attended by each of the members is given as appendix I. In five of these meetings the members of the Executive Council of the Congress Labour Union were also present on invitation as matters affecting common interests had to be discussed.

Membership

5 126,643 members have renewed their membership or joined newly the Congress during the period under review. The number is no doubt a very encouraging one. It is not likely to be challenged if it is said that our organisation among representative organisations in the country has the highest percentage of the population whom it claims to represent. But there is still room for considerable improvement. One would have thought that the great enthusiasm evoked by the Inaugural Sessions at Gampola would have been cashed in the shape of a very large membership. But unfortunately the six month ending February, 1941 had brought a membership of only 20,903. The Head Office spared no pains to induce greater enrolment of members and the response from the District Committees though in some cases not as steady as it could have been, has resulted on 31st December, 1941 in a membership of 126,643. That there is room for improvement is borne out by the fact that the enrolment during the months of November and December after the date for the Annual Sessions were fixed has been more brisk. It will lead to better organisation if the bulk of the members pay in their subscriptions within the first few months of the year. A list of the various district Committees and the number of members in the respective areas is given in appendix II.

Finance

6 The Cash balance on 1st August, 1940 was Rs. 11,147/45 and the cash balance on 31st December, 1941 Rs. 6,306/55. The increased expenditure is accounted for chiefly by the full quota paid to the District Committees during

the period, while during the previous year quota of 10 cents per member was paid to the District Committees in respect of only about one fifth of the number of members enrolled and the full payment of the contribution due from the Congress to the Congress Labour Union in respect of members, who had joined prior to 31st May, 1940. The other causes are the necessarily increased cost of establishment due to the greater activities, legal expenses and to expenses connected with the Indo-Ceylon talks, although the bulk of the last item was met by subscriptions collected from merchants for that purpose. It is regrettable that large advances and arrears are outstanding in the hands of District Committees. Sri. T. S. Rajagopalan has been our Auditor. A quarterly audit has been regularly carried out. The work involved is of an arduous nature and our thanks are due to Sri T. S. Rajagopalan for doing that work for a nominal fee. An audited statement of accounts as on 31st December, 1941 is found in appendix III.

Indo-Ceylon Problem

7. The most important work of the Working Committee during the period under review was in relation to the questions which are comprised in what is now called the Indo-Ceylon problem. The contents of the problem are (1) the status and rights of Indians in Ceylon and (2) conditions of future immigration from India. These are questions that require very intimate knowledge of the history of Indian emigration and of the present conditions and a keen practical vision of the possibilities of the future status and rights of Indians in Ceylon.

Inter-Governmental Exploratory Talks of 1940

8. At the invitation of the Government of Ceylon, the Government of India agreed to receive a Delegation from the Government of Ceylon at New Delhi to discuss the questions outstanding between the two countries. These discussions took place in November, 1940. It therefore became imperative to send a deputation to India to present the Ceylon-Indian point of view. It was fortunate that the Working Committee had in

Sri Peri Sundaram, a member who had the requisite knowledge and capacity to lead a deputation of the kind. The Working Committee at its very first meeting appointed Sri Peri Sundaram, (Leader), Sri V R. M. Letchimanan Chettiar, Diwan Bahadur I. X. Pereira, Sri H. M. Desai, Sri G.R. Motha and Janab A. Aziz to form a deputation to proceed to India and place the case of the Indians in Ceylon before the public and the Government of India. The deputation contained in its personnel the best of our experienced leaders who were available. Sri T. S. Rajagopalan acted as Secretary to the Delegation. This deputation left for India on 20th October, 1940 and by addressing Public Meetings, interviewing leaders of the different parties, the Hon'ble Sir G. S. Bajpai, the Member of the Government of India in charge of the Department dealing with the Indians Overseas, the Hon'ble Sir Ramasamy Mudaliar, and other members of the Government of India, was able to ensure that our point of view was well understood. The measure of the efforts of the deputation and of their success can be had from the attitude adopted by the delegation of the Government of India when they met the Ministerial delegation from Ceylon at New Delhi in November, 1940. This attitude evinced a full understanding of the problem and a willingness to go as far as possible to meet the wishes of the Ceylon delegation. The members of our deputation were later appointed as a Standing Committee to watch and deal with the Ceylon questions as occasion from time to time may require.

The Delegation of the Government of India consisted of:—

The Hon'ble Sir Girja Shanker Bajpai, K.B.E., C.I.E., I.C.S.,
Member for Education, Health and Lands,

The Hon'ble Diwan Bahadur Sir Ramasamy Mudaliar, Member for
Commerce,

The Hon'ble Sir Alan Lloyd, C.I.E., I.C.S. and

Mr. G. S. Bozman, C.I.E., I.C.S. assisted by

Mr. G. T. Rutherford, C.S.E., C.I.E., I.C.S. and

Mr. A. Vittal Pai, O.B.E., I.C.S.

Mr. S. Dutt, I.C.S., was the Secretary

The Delegation of the Government of Ceylon consisted of:—

The Hon. Mr. D. S. Senanayake, Minister for Agriculture and Lands,

The Hon. Mr. H. J. Huxham, C.M.G., Financial Secretary,

The Hon. Mr. G. C. S. Corea, Minister for Labour, Industry & Commerce, and

The Hon. Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, Minister for Local Administration.

Messrs. F. C. Gimson, C.C.S., Controller of Labour, and D. H. Balfour, C.C.S., Director of Commerce & Industries, accompanied the Delegation as Advisers.

Mr. L. J. Seneviratne, C.C.S., was Secretary to the Delegation.

The Ceylon delegation claimed that as regards Indians already in Ceylon India should agree to measures intended to reduce their number. In fact they went to the extent of frankly stating that even Indians who can pass through the difficult test of domicile of choice according to the English law should be liable to discrimination and pressure with a view to forcing them to quit Ceylon. The Government of India, however without insisting on the assurances and undertakings whereby they were persuaded to except Ceylon from the operation of the Indian Emigration Laws, in their desire to reach an amicable settlement were willing to make very important concessions. The Indian Government Delegation abandoned its claim for redress of the past discriminations against Indians in Ceylon such as the existing franchise discriminations except to the extent of making the provisions practicable, the exclusion of Indian estate labourers from the Village Committee Franchise and the discharge and repatriation of Indian daily paid workmen in Government Departments, and further agreed to serious inroads on the right of Indians in Ceylon viz: with regard to employment in the Government Service and to benefits of lands already mapped out under the Land Development Ordinance. The Congress agreed to these specific limitations on the rights of Indians in Ceylon for the sake of peace but decided that it is

not possible to surrender any more of our rights. The decision of the Congress has been accepted by every section of the Indian Community. The talks between the two delegations lasted from 5th November to 12th November, 1940 and ended in a dead lock. The report of the Ceylon Delegation and the proceedings of the Talks as well as the Statement of the Government of India have been published as Sessional Papers Nos. VIII, IX and X of 1941.

Aftermath of the dead lock.

9. The return of the Ceylon Ministerial delegation was marked by an extreme anti-Indian campaign both in the press and the platform and it is deplorable that even responsible Ministers of State indulged in unseemly vituperative language against the leading men of the Indian Deputation like Sri. Peri Sundaram and Diwan Bahadur I. X. Pereira. The thanks of the Ceylon Indians are due to His Excellency the Governor who on the date of the publication of the proceedings of the exploratory talks and the connected reports, drew the attention of the Board of Ministers and the State Council by means of a Message to the State Council to the undertakings and assurances on which the Indians had entered Ceylon and to the impossibility of His Excellency as head of the Government giving assent to any act of the State Council which will be inconsistent with the undertakings and assurances. The State Council adjourned all business for the purpose, it was said, of expediting the drafting of legislation with a view to register non-Ceylonese and to restrict their entry into Ceylon and as a protest against the action of the Governor in sending the Message referred.

Draft Immigration and Registration of non-Ceylonese Bills.

The Draft Bills were published on 26th February, 1941, the First and Second Readings took place soon after and the bills were referred to the Standing Committee 'A' of the State Council. The Working Committee after careful consideration

of the Bill considered these so objectionable in principle that no purpose would be served by waiting on the Standing Committee 'A', as that Committee had no power, even if it could have been persuaded thereto, to recommend any amendment against the principles underlying the draft bills. The Working Committee also requested the Indian Members of the State Council, Diwan Bahadur I. X. Pereira, Sri S. P. Vytilingam and Sri K. Natesa Iyer not to attend the Standing Committee 'A' when it discussed these Bills as a mark of protest. Diwan Bahadur I. X. Pereira acceded to this request. Eventually the Ceylon Government invited the Government of India to send a delegation to Ceylon to resume the exploratory talks that ended abruptly in November, 1940.

Meeting Ceylon Ministers.

11. Sir Baron Jayatileke invited the President and a few representative Indians to meet him and some of his Ministerial Colleagues informally. The standing Committee above referred to met the Ministers and discussed the Indo-Ceylon Problem, particularly in relation to the above two bills. There were two meetings but nothing definite resulted.

Indo-Burma Agreement and our apprehension.

12. Meanwhile the Indo-Burma conversations on the questions of the rights of Indians in Burma between the delegates of the Governments of India and of Burma resulted in an agreement which proposed very discriminatory and humiliating conditions as regards the status both of Indians resident in Burma and of the future Indian immigrants into Burma. The Working Committee promptly expressed its dissatisfaction against that Indo-Burma Agreement and its sympathy with the efforts of the Burma Indians to secure modifications of the agreement and appealed to the Government of India to postpone the Indo-Ceylon talks if the repercussions of the Indo-Burma Agreement and the exigencies of the war are likely to be prejudicial to interests of the Indians in Ceylon. The people of India, irrespective of their party alignments, condemned the Indo-Burma Agree-

ment and supported our proposals to postpone the Indo-Ceylon Talks and demanded that unofficals be associated with the delegation of the Government of India. The Government of India insisted on sending a delegation including however two unofficals. The Indian delegation consisted of Sir Girja Shanker Bajpai K.B.E., C.I.E., I.C.S., Sir Mirza Ismail, K.C.I.E., O.B.E., Sri. T. R. Venkatarama Sastry, C.I.E., Sri T.G. Rutherford, C.S.I., C.I.E., I.C.S. with Mr. G. S. Bozman, C.I.E., I.C.S., and Sri A. Vittal Pai, O.B.E., I.C.S. as advisers & Sri T.N.S. Raghavan, I.C.S., was the Secretary. The delegation reached Colombo on 4th September, 1941 and the following day met the delegation of the Government of Ceylon composed of Hon'ble Mr. D. S. Senanayake, Hon. Mr. G. C. S. Corea and the Hon'ble Mr. R. H. Drayton with Mr. L. J. Seneviratne C.C.S. as Secretary. The conversations between the two delegations continued till 21st September, 1941 with certain interruptions.

Congress Contact with Indian Delegation

13. The Working Committee appointed a deputation consisting of the President, Sri Peri Sundaram, Diwan Bahadur I. X. Pereira, Sri S. P. Vytilingam, Sri K. Natesa Iyer, Sri V. R. M. Letchumanan Chettiar, Sri H.M. Desai, Sri K. Satyawagiswara Iyer, Janab A. Aziz and Sri George R. Motha with Sri T. S. Rajagopalan and Sri S. Somasundaram as Secretaries to place the case of Ceylon Indians before the Indian delegation. It is true that the delegation met the Indian Delegation on three occasions and members of the deputation had informally access to the members of Indian Delegation. But the discussions were not free enough to explain the Ceylon Indians' point of view, as the discussions specially at the formal meetings were confined to specific points on which the Indian delegation desired to have the opinion of the Ceylon Indians. The result of these Inter-Governmental talks is well known and is embodied in a Joint Report in the shape of agreed conclusions and published in Sessional Paper XXVIII of 1941.

14. The subjects dealt with in this Joint Report were necessarily of a complicated nature. It must be said here that our

President's clear grasp of the problems stood in good stead. The minimum of rights and facilities necessary to safeguard the honour and interest of the Indian population living in Ceylon and the conditions under which future Indian emigration should be permitted were embodied in a brief memorandum for the information of Sir G. S. Bajpai and his colleagues. When the draft agreed conclusions were put to our deputation the leader, Sri Peri Sundaram, informed the Indian Delegation that Ceylon Indians were unable to commit themselves to those proposals. There appeared to be some wavering on the part of some as to the unacceptable nature of the agreed conclusions, but on deeper consideration, their sinister implications spelling the gradual liquidation of the Indians in Ceylon easily became manifest to all. Your Committee records with considerable pride that the Congress was able to bring together all sections of Indians in Ceylon on this most important of the questions with which the Ceylon Indians are confronted. In the condemnation of the agreed conclusions, the Ceylon Indians have been unanimous: unanimity was also shown in the demand for the necessary modifications. It was evident that no Indian has taken a different approach to the Indo-Ceylon problem and the Ceylon Indians have spoken with one voice through the Congress. No member of the Working Committee had at any time differed from the course of action taken by the Congress on the Indo-Ceylon relations.

Further Action Taken

16. The Working Committee discussed confidentially the agreed conclusions as disclosed to the Congress deputation at its meeting at Nawalapitiya on 2nd November, 1941, and expressed deep dissatisfaction with the terms. The Working Committee also appointed a deputation consisting of Sri George R. Motha, Sri S. P. Vytilingam and Sri S. Somasundaram and Janab A. Aziz with Sri Motha as Leader to personally place the objections of the Ceylon Indian Community before the public and the Government of India, as soon as the Joint Report was officially published. The President authorised Sri S. Somasundaram to proceed at once to India for the purpose of informing public opinion in India of the principal objectionable features in the

agreed conclusions. Sri H.M. Desai, Sri S.P. Vytilingam and Janab A. Aziz happened to be visiting India at the time and they were urged to do what they can to interest the leaders and the public in our problems. Sri H.M. Desai and Sri S. Somasundaram and later Sri S. P. Vytilingam were able to visit Sevagram and interest Mahatma Gandhi in this question. They and Janab Aziz also did very useful work by interviewing various leaders of the Indian public and by statements in the Press. It was unfortunate that Sri Vytilingam and Janab A. Aziz were unable to join the deputation with Sri Motha but the President was able to secure the services of Sri H. M. Desai, our Overseas Secretary, for the purpose. Sri Motha and Sri Desai left for India on 27th October and returned on 24th November. The whole of that period was devoted by them in explaining to the public and particularly to the leaders of parties and members of both houses of the Central Legislature the objectionable features of the Joint Report and the amendments that were essential to it if the honour and welfare of the Ceylon Indians were not to suffer irretrievably. Particular mention must be made of the work of Sri T. S. Rajagopalan who within the short time that was available prepared a memorandum clearly explaining our objections to proposals of the Joint Report and setting out the minimum requirements of Ceylon Indians. You are aware of the results of our efforts ; they have so far been fruitful. We have convinced Indian leaders of all parties and Indian public men and the members of the Central Legislatures that important modifications are necessary to the Joint Report. Our deputation and all those who helped in the cause and particularly Sri Motha and Sri Desai are to be congratulated in having helped us to secure from the Legislative Assembly a statement of the principles that should be applied in any equitable settlement of the Indo-Ceylon problem. The Legislative Assembly of India accepted the motion of Sri Hooseinbhoj A. Laljee.

Laljee's Amendment

" An amendment moved by Mr. Hooseinbhoj Laljee (Independent), expressed the opinion that Indians in Ceylon on

the prescribed date of agreement and those who have been residents in Ceylon within a specified period before the date of the agreement should have freedom of entry into Ceylon and no regional and occupational restrictions should be imposed upon them and that they should be entitled to full rights of citizenship on the completion of the prescribed period and that for the future provisions be made for entry and occupations so that the trade interests of Indians are safeguarded and that unskilled labourers permitted to emigrate are assured of freedom of movement and choice of employment and opportunity to acquire full citizenship rights. "

17. On behalf of the Indians in Ceylon the Committee expresses its deep sense of gratitude to all those who have contributed to the work of safeguarding our interests and our honour to the leaders of the different parties in India to Mahatma Gandhi, to Sri S. Satyamurty, Janab M. A. Jinnah, Sir Raza Ali, Sir Purushotmadas Thakurdas, Sir Vitot Chandravayar, Sri David Devadoss, Dr. Banerjee, Sri Kalikar, Nawab Aliza Liaquat Ali Khan, Sri M. A. Master, to Sri A. K. Waiz of the Imperial Citizenship Association, to Sri D.G. Mullekar, Secretary of the Federation of the Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Sri C. L. Patel, Secretary of the Indian Overseas Central Association and other leaders of the Indian public who gave encouraging and sympathetic hearing to the Congress deputation and espoused our cause both in and outside the Legislatures.

18. We should record our gratitude to His Excellency the Viceroy for creating a separate portfolio for the department of Indians Overseas and entrusting same to a member of the expanded Executive Council. We are confident that the Hon'ble Mr. M. S. Aney will uphold the honour of India by securing for Indians in Ceylon and in other overseas countries their just and legitimate rights. Our thanks are particularly due to the Hon'ble Mr. M. S. Aney for the sympathetic hearing which he gave to our deputation of Sri G. R. Motha and Sri H. M. Desai and to the

leaders of the different parties in the Legislative Assembly like Sir H. Gidney, Sri Hussanbhoy A. Laljee, A. C. Dutt, Jamnadas Metha, Pandit H. Kunzru and other members of the Central Legislative Assembly and the Council of State who were ever ready to help our cause.

Legislations of Special Interest to Indians

19. The most important legislative proposals threatening the status and rights of Indians were the drafts above referred to of the Ordinances to control Immigration and for the Registration of non-Ceylonese. The other important legislation was the Wages Boards' Ordinance. When the Inaugural Sessions took place, this Ordinance had passed the Second Reading and was in the Committee stage. The Committee presented two short Memoranda on the Bill and Sri G. R. Motha on behalf of the Congress appeared on two dates before the Standing Committee 'B' which was considering the Bill to explain the views of the Congress particularly the point of view of the estate labourers. On the first day Sri Motha was assisted by Janab M. U. Khan and on the second day by Sri S. Somasundaram. This Ordinance is now on the statute book, but its effect is held in abeyance by the delay in passing the necessary subsidiary regulations.

Village Tribunal Bills

20 A draft of an Ordinance to amend and consolidate the law relating to Village Tribunals has passed its second reading and is now before the Standing Committee 'A'. The Working Committee has asked for an opportunity to place its views on the Bill. The important point to consider in the Bill from the Indian point of view is whether the Indian estate labourer who is denied Village Committee Franchise should be brought under the jurisdiction of the Village Committee. The provision that parties should pay for the interpreter if they require one is an iniquitous penalty for an inquisitive group which happens to be in a minority in any area. These and other objections to the draft have to be pointed out and modifications urged. This will form

one of the earliest items of work which the new office bearers and the Working Committee will have to attend to.

District Committees

21. There were 23 District Committees in September, 1940. During the period under review District Committees were formed at Kurunegala, Kalutara, Galaha and Colombo. Agrapatna, Anuradhapura and Maturata District Committees are not functioning at present. Haldumulla District Committee was amalgamated with the Haputale District Committee. The credit of the large membership belongs to the District Committees. There were no doubt instances in which the office bearers of the District Committees have not been fully alive and we hope the new elections recently held would have removed such drawbacks in every District.

District Officers & Staff

22. The Working Committee in March, 1941 decided that every district shall have a District Officer whose services shall be available to the Labour Union as District Labour Representative and that the salary of such officer if paid shall be fixed by the Working Committee and be paid in equal shares by the Head Office and the District Committee concerned. The following are the names of salaried District officers :— Sri C. V. Velupillai, Sri Mey E. Lingam, Sri S. M. Subbiah, Sri M. Siven Pillai, Sri N. M. Palanisamy, Sri G. S. Wilson, Sri G. J. Motha, and Sri V. K. Vellayan. The Yatiyantota District Committee alone has appointed its own paid District Officer.

23. It is to be reported with great regret that the one great difficulty which the office-bearers have experienced is to maintain discipline and control. It may be a weakness natural to any young democratic institution, but the tendency of paid officers to become masters of the situation in their area and to attempt to flout the authority of the office bearers is a most pernicious one which should be stopped. The office-bearers

complain that such active officers had frequently the active sympathy and support of those who should be considered responsible members of the executive. This institution which has now such a large support from the Indians in Ceylon and particularly from the mass of labour, if it is to maintain and improve its opportunities for service should take immediate steps to end this state of affairs. It will be true to say that the achievement of the Congress, great as it is, would have been considerably added to but for this lack of discipline and co-ordinated control which was mainly due to such misplaced support to officers and committees who needed some correction.

The Ceylon Indian Congress Labour Union

24. The labour union is intended to provide a trade union organisation for the worker members of the Congress. It is recommended that members should read the full story of the Ceylon Indian Congress Labour Union since its formation in the report of the Labour Union which will be submitted at its Special General Meeting to be held on the 11th Jan. 1942. But in view of the close association between the two organisations this report will be incomplete without a brief reference to the activities of the Labour Union. The Congress offers the ready made frame-work of an organisation spread throughout all parts of the country where the Indian labourers are found in any considerable number for the Labour Union to organise its activities. Both the Congress and the Labour Union aim at unifying and harmonising the whole Ceylon Indian community. There may be apparent clashes of interest but a long and enlightened view indicates that united action is possible and an immediate necessity for the salvation of the Ceylon Indians. The Congress has done its best; while standing stoutly for the cause of the labourers who form the bulk of its members it aims to secure that others like head kanganies and salaried employees have their legitimate rights and interest safeguarded. Suspicions do still exist but it is true to say that

the work during the year has strengthened the sense of common interest among all sections of the Indian community. The Congress attempted to bring about a working arrangement between the Labour Union and the Head Kanganies Association and a draft agreement was drawn up at a conference between the Working Committee and a representative deputation of the Head Kanganies Association. The latter Association while fully accepting the agreement so drawn up has not in spite of reminders taken the step it had agreed to take for the purpose of bringing the agreement into force.

Co-ordination between the Congress and the Labour Union

25. While retaining the separate entities of the two organisations and their functions, co-ordination between the two organisations has been well established. Offices and staff are common. By a convention adopted by the Working Committee of the Congress and the Executive Council of the Labour Union the President of the Congress has been accepted as President of the Labour Union. The District officers of the Congress are appointed District Labour Representatives of the Labour Union. The proposal has been made that their work as labour representatives should be supervised by an advisory committee nominated by the Executive Council of the Labour Union in consultation with the Congress District Committee with the approval of the Working Committee. The office bearers of the Congress considered themselves as bound to work as much for the Union and did so and your Secretaries were fully occupied at all times with the work of the Union. They are authorised to sign for the General Secretary of the Union. In fact from March to November 1941 your Secretaries have carried out the whole secretarial work of the Union as Sri G. Madhavaram, the General Secretary of the Union had submitted his resignation. The foundation of solid co-operation between the two organisations which is essential for their progress and the welfare of the

Indians in Ceylon may be said to be well laid. There are still details to be worked out. Stress should be again laid on the necessity for greater response from the Districts to instructions sent from the head quarters and more team work among all those concerned in the working of the two organisations. Directions from the central office should not be viewed as encroachments on the freedom of the Districts. The chief and difficult requirement of such large scale organisations is cohesion and discipline the need for which is greatest in the initial stages.

The Seven Point Agreement

26. The working of the Seven Point Agreement which was entered between the Ceylon Planters' Association and the Ceylon Estate Proprietary Association on the side of those employing labour and the Trade Unions of labourers among which the Ceylon Indian Congress is a very important one with the largest membership, was reviewed at two conferences of the organisations parties to the agreement. While it was admitted on all sides that the procedure embodied in the agreement provided a means of settling disputes it was pointed out that the denial of the right of entry into estates to representatives of the Trade Union was a great handicap. The first conference was on 16th June, 1941. Sri G. R. Motha, Sri S. Somasundaram and Sri K. Rajalingam represented the Congress Labour Union. The conference could not be proceeded with because the employer refused to concede this right of entry into states, a right which they had originally agreed to give when the Seven Point Agreement was entered into.

The Hon'ble the Minister called a second conference on 17th November 1941, in which the Ceylon Labour Union was represented by the President, Sri Peri Sundaram, Sri G. Madhavaram, Sri S. Somasundaram, Sri S. C. Banker and Sri K. Rajalingam. This conference also could not for the same reasons proceed to really review the working of the Seven Point Agreement and introduce the necessary amendments so as to make the work smooth and more efficient for all concerned. The Planters' Association was

unwilling to recognise the right of the labourer to have access to his friends and advisors in the place where he lives. Our President and Mr. K. Natesa Aiyar were however invited by the Chairman of the Planters' Association to address a Meeting of the Planters on the subject and they have done so. But it is uncertain what more is required to bring conviction to the planters. It is most unfortunate that some Superintendents disregard the Seven Point Agreement. The Planters' Association while it is so punctilious in pointing out the peccadilloes of trade union officials is unable to bring such Superintendents to honour the agreement. To leave such Superintendents alone is to place a premium on disloyalty to the Parent Planters Association.

27. While the planters have gained virtual immunity from lightning strikes by the Seven Point Agreement the Trade Union Movement is being heavily handicapped by the labourers being kept away from the leaders of their choice. It is really very creditable that with such handicaps, without opportunities of advice and guidance in times of need nor help when charges, even criminal charges, are levelled against them, the estate labourers have responded so well to the call of their organisation. The Congress Labour Union aims at securing the just rights of the labourers as human beings and is anxious to shew that it is not inimical to the just rights of any other class.

It has to be admitted that most of the time of the Union officials is taken up with inquiries into cases of dismissal or threatened dismissals. We have heard complaints from planters that the trade unions insist on questioning every case of discharge. But it cannot be denied that Superintendents do magnify the most trivial incidents into grave causes for dismissal if the labourer concerned happens to be a member of a Trade Union. Besides the subordinate staffs on the estates very frequently are apprehensive of the effects of organised unity among the laborers or resent the manifestation of a tendency to

assert their rights when they are united together, and consciously or unconsciously get prejudiced against active members of the Trade Unions. There is also the fact that to the Indian estate labourer, circumstanced as he is, loss of work is a real calamity. No one will be more gratified than the Executive of the Congress Labour Union if the Superintendents will see to it that no labourer is dealt with more harshly because of his membership or activities in a trade union; that will give the Trade Union leader and officials time for real work to better the conditions of the labourers.

Congress Labour Union and the Planters' Association

28. Certain issues for discussion with the Planters Association were raised by the Congress Labour Union in March 1941. A conference between the representatives of the Labour Union, the Planters' Association took place on 17, 18 and 20 June 1941. The Congress Labour Union was represented by the President and Sri G. R. Motha, Sri S. Somasundaram, Sri A. D. Sengamalai and Sri K. Rajalingam. The interview was friendly, the reasonableness of most of the demands was recognised, and an intention of gradually adopting them was indicated. But their assurance while they hold good for the good employers for whom it is scarcely necessary, does not appear to have made any difference in the case of others.

Wages

29. Of the points raised with the Planters Association an important one was the inadequacy of the increase in wages as fixed by the Estate Wages Boards early last year. The Congress Labour Union was pressing for a further increase and continued to make strong and urgent representations to the Planters' Association and to the Department of Labour. The presence of Diwan Bhadur I. X. Pereira, Sri S. P. Vytilingam and Sri G. R. Motha in the Board of

Indian Immigrant Labour was of invaluable help. It is good news to the labourers that at the meeting of the Board of Indian Immigrant Labour held last month the representatives of the employers have agreed to give a rise in wages as from the beginning of next month. The rate agreed upon cannot be considered adequate but as some immediate relief is urgent, it has to be welcomed. The basic rate for an adult male labourer in the country is to be 57 cts. and a dearness allowance of 6 cts is to be add to it. The basic rates for women and children for mid-country and low country will be in the same proportion to the up-country adult male wages rate as they are to-day - But there is a tendency on the part of superintendents to decrease the quantity of rice customarily issued to the labourers. It is to be hoped that this move will not be persisted in.

Maternity Benefits

30. As members are aware there were attempts to exclude the estate labourers from the benefits of the new Maternity Benefit Ordinance. The Congress was pressing on the State Councillors that such a discrimination was unjustified and has succeeded. After the Ordinance was passed there was considerable delay in publishing the necessary subsidiary regulations and the Working Committee was pressing the authorities that the benefits of the Ordinance should be brought to the labourers without delay. At last the Ordinance has been brought into force and it is some consolation that the loss to the labourers caused by the delay has to a certain extent been made good by making the benefits restrospective from July 1941. These benefits provided by the new Ordinance are in addition to the bennefits that have been customarily provided under the Medical Wants Ordinance.

Proposed Amalgamation of the Ceylon Indian Workers' Federation

31. The Working Committee interested itself in the amalgamation of the Ceylon Indian Congress Labour Union and the

Ceylon Indian Workers' Federation. It was mooted for the purpose of securing united action in the common interests of Indians in Ceylon both political and economical on the eve of the arrival of the Delegation of the Government of India in September 1941. This Committee approved of the proposal and appointed Sri K. Natesa Aiyar and Sri K. Satiyawagiswara Aiyar to the Working Committee, to facilitate the amalgamation. Negotiations on various aspects of the question are being carried on.

Acknowledgment

32. It only remains for your Committee to offer its warmest thanks to all those who have borne the burden of the constant and heavy work involved and have otherwise helped the Congress, to the President, Sri Peri Sundaram, who has discharged his duties in perhaps the most critical time our gratitude is due and to him more than any one else is due the credit of representing the Indian view in the recent Inter-Governmental negotiations carefully and diligently and preventing any slip and to the Hony. Secretaries Sri George R. Motha and Sri S. Somasundaram, the latter of whom had sacrificed much financially and otherwise and spent a great part of his time at Colombo for the sole purpose of attending to the work of the Congress, the organisation is beholden for the progress it has made. Our thanks are due to Sri D.M. Vora and Sri H.M. Desai for having kept good account and taken good care of our funds. Sri Desai has also done signal service as Overseas Secretary by keeping the Indian Public and Leaders alive to our problems. To the members of the deputations which visited India and the Indian Merchants who subscribed liberally towards the cost of the two deputations we owe a deep debt of gratitude. To every member of the Working Committee our thanks are due. To the various District Committees and its officers our appreciation has been already recorded once again the Committee thanks them. Last, but not least there are the regular salaried employees in the District Committees and at the Head Office, who have responded well often keeping long and late hours in helping in the work of the Congress,

particularly Sri K. Rajalingam, who as Office Manager has been able to overcome to a considerable extent the difficulties inherent in running an office of a democratic institution in its early stages, to them the Committee expresses its sense of appreciation.

Before concluding the report, the committee thank you all members immensely for their whole hearted co-operation and wish that the new office-bearers and the new Committees may have the same and if possible better co-operation and preserve what has been done by this Committee and achieve what it has left undone or what remain to be done so that the Congress may grow from strength to strength.

By order of

The Ceylon Indian Congress Committee

GEORGE R. MOTH,

S. SOMASUNDARAM,

Hony. Joint Secretaries.

APPENDIX I.

ATTENDANCE AT WORKING COMMITTEE MEETINGS.

Peri Sundaram	18
V. R. M. Letchumanan Chettiar	1
Dewan Bahadur I. X. Pereira	10
H. M. Desai	13
G. R. Motha	17
A. Aziz	18
V. E. K. R. Sowmyamurthy Thondaman	11
D. M. Vora	7
P. T. Thanu Pillai	16
G. Madhavaram	15
J. N. Britto	11
S. Somasundaram	17
M. P. Sinniah	18
S. R. M. Valliappa Chettiar	12
A. D. Gnansmanickam	1
K. H. A. Cader	9
S. D. Anbiah	7
K. Rajalingam	9
A. S. A. Samy	8
S. P. Vytilingam	5
G. R. Rajapreyer	6
S. M. Sheikappa	12
V. M. Pandian	4
G. Kovil Pillai	19
M. S. Solomon	7
A. D. Sengamalai	9
C. K. Kunhireman	1
O. V. Kunhayana	4
K. Natesa Iyer	2
K. Satyawageeswara Iyer	2

Total Number of Meetings held during the Period
under review 21

ATTENDANCE AT WORKING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

1	Mr. [Name]
2	Mr. [Name]
3	Mr. [Name]
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94	Mr. [Name]
95	Mr. [Name]
96	Mr. [Name]
97	Mr. [Name]
98	Mr. [Name]
99	Mr. [Name]
100	Mr. [Name]

Total number of meetings held during the period
under review 21

APPENDIX II.
THE CEYLON INDIAN CONGRESS
MEMBERSHIP.

From 1st August 1940 to 31st December 1942.

1	Badulla	...	3810
2	Balangoda	...	2967
3	Dolosbage	...	1079
4	Haputale	...	10399
5	Kotagala	...	2645
6	Kegalle	...	2246
7	Kandy	...	4201
8	Matale	...	7933
9	Nuwara Eliya	...	9163
10	Nawalapitiya	...	7029
11	Peradeniya	...	2216
12	Yatiantota	...	16123
13	Galle	...	521
14	Talawakelle	...	8144
15	Gampola	...	6586
16	Punduloya	...	1572
17	Jaffna	...	1200
18	Ratnapura	...	7316
19	Kurunegalle	...	1119
20	Kahawatte	...	3165
21	Madulkelle	...	386
22	Hatton	...	17550
23	Galaha	...	2860
24	Kalutara	...	2534
25	Colombo	...	7882
26	Peliyagoda	...	247
			<u>130893</u>

APPENDIX II THE CEYLON INDIAN CONGRESS MEMBERSHIP

From 1st August 1940 to 31st December 1942

1810	Kadalla	1
2007	Kalundoda	2
1073	Kobesago	3
1090	Kabulata	4
2042	Kobukala	5
2045	Kadalla	6
4251	Kandy	7
1553	Kabala	8
2103	Kawatha E.	9
2002	Kawathagille	10
2116	Kawathagille	11
2123	Kawathagille	12
231	Kalla	13
2441	Kalawathula	14
2585	Kawatha	15
271	Kawathagille	16
1700	Kalla	17
2116	Kalawathula	18
2119	Kawathagille	19
2122	Kawathagille	20
222	Kawathagille	21
1750	Kalla	22
2000	Kalla	23
2004	Kalla	24
1882	Kalla	25
211	Kalla	26
190846	Kalla	27