

Fissures and Solidarities: Weaknesses within the Working Class Movement in the Early Twentieth Century

MICHAEL ROBERTS

A recent work has brought to the forefront the role of working class agitation and A. E. Goonesinha's associational activities in the history of British Ceylon.¹ This path-breaking study has revealed that working class combination and agitation in the period *before* 1920 were sporadic actions which flared up from time to time. Though the workers at the railway workshops at Maradana provided some measure of leadership from 1912, there was little continuity in the arena and the direction of working class agitation. There was no over-arching organisational foundation. With Goonesinha's 'discovery' of working class discontent in the early 1920's, however, and the birth of the Ceylon Labour Union in September 1922, organisational foundations and a measure of continuity were evolved. Several major strikes occurred in Colombo, in 1923, 1927, and 1929. The British officials were led to modify their opinions and look more favourably upon the rival Ceylon Workers' Federation and its moderate leadership, while looking askance at Goonesinha and his cohorts. And the leading British companies formed the Ceylon Employers' Federation in October 1928 and negotiated a collective agreement with Goonesinha in 1929. Goonesinha had arrived. But not so the working class, not to the same degree anyway; the depression years 1929-32 were to reveal how slender its lines of strength were, how limited its solidarities, how deep its fissures.

This interpretative outline and Kumari Jayawardena's detailed narrative provides one with a foundation from which to examine the weaknesses of the working class movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Using her book as a point of departure, this essay surveys the nature of the proletariat in British Ceylon during this period and inquires into certain aspects of working class identity. It devotes particular attention to the question of working class consciousness. In these efforts, it makes no claim to being a comprehensive study. It merely, so to speak, seeks to break the shell. The moulding of more definitive and permanent forms of knowledge from this chrysalis will be a task for subsequent studies.

1. V. K. Jayawardena, *The Rise of the Labor Movement in Ceylon*, Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1972. What follows is a selective summary which also embodies an interpretation of my own.

The Proletariat in British Ceylon: Some Weaknesses

Against the thrust of Kumari Jayawardena's narrative, this survey led me to two significant conclusions regarding the proletariat in Ceylon during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: firstly, that the working class was both diffused and segmented; and secondly, that it possessed limited solidarity and lacked a well-developed consciousness of its proletarian status. In other words, to use Marx's perceptive and classic terminology, the proletariat *in Ceylon* may have been "a class as against capital" (i.e. a class "in itself"), but it was not a class "for itself."² Furthermore, these conclusions could be extended, with some qualifications, to the working class *in Colombo* as well.

These conclusions might seem surprising in the light of the story unfolded by Kumari Jayawardena and her pains to highlight instances of working class solidarity and when set against her passing references to "the class conscious and militant urban working class" of the late 1920's and their "maturity and self-confidence."³ Since this is an area of debate, some of her information might be reiterated here. During the strike of the workers at the railway locomotive workshops in 1912, for instance, Kumari writes (p. 157):

There were also strong feelings of class solidarity among the strikers. Some intimidation of nonstrikers took place, and it was reported that the 500 firemen, cleaners, and coal trimmers who struck in sympathy with the locomotive workshop men were not only noisy and boisterous, but also shouted and jeered at passing trains and threw stones. A certain "jaunty spirit" was also noticeable among the working class; after one of the meetings held by the strikers, a Sinhalese song was sung in chorus and "a holiday feeling" prevailed. Sympathy for the strikers was also shown by other sections of the Colombo working class. The government was unsuccessful in its efforts to get fitters from other government departments to work on the railway during the strike, and workers at the Harbour, Municipality, Government Factory, Walkers, and other firms made collections for the strike fund.

Again, during the harbour workers' strike in 1927 we are told (p. 288):

The strikers received considerable help from other sections of the workers and from the public, and this enabled them to conduct a militant campaign. Mass meetings were held at which railway, harbour, Government Factory, and printing-press workers demonstrated their support for the strikers

2. See Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, n.d., pp. 165-67. Also see the essays by Bottomore and Meszaros in Meszaros (ed.), 1971, pp. 53-54, 85-87, 92-93 and 105 ff. Also see "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte" in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Selected Works*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970, pp. 170-71. In the latter, of course, Marx applied this analysis to the French smallholding peasants: "the great mass of the French nation is formed by simple addition of homologous magnitudes, much as potatoes in a sack form a sack of potatoes.... In so far as....the identity of their interests begets no community, no national bond and no political organisation among them, they do not form a class."

3. V. K. Jayawardena, 1972, pp. 124, 157, 243-46, 288, 293-98 and 362.

and made donations for the strike fund. Many influential shopkeepers offered to supply food to the strikers, and Goonesinha announced that "Podisingho of Galpotha and Banda Appu of Bankshall Street were prepared to feed 5000 people at a time night and day."

These are important occasions and rightly receive stress. But I would maintain that such expressions merely indicate that working class consciousness had begun to develop and had reached a fledgling stage; nothing more. For one thing, on Kumari's own evidence, these two strikes and the tramway strike against Boustead Bros. involved anti-British feeling and drew support as movements which defied authority and remonstrated against British rule. Goonesinha himself was "basically an anti-imperialist" and "an aggressive nationalist and reformer, a critic of society rather than a revolutionary."⁴ With reference to the general strike of February-March 1923 and the role of the Ceylon Labour Union, it is observed:⁵

The strength of the new union was derived from political factors. It presented a challenge not merely to individual employers but to the political and social stability of the country. The new labor leader directed his attacks against British rule in general and in particular against the local authorities, including the police, the Ceylonese moderate politicians, and the leaders of the Ceylon Workers Federation. The fact that Goonesinha was championing the workers, and denouncing the government and the Ceylonese "privileged classes," met with an immediate response from the workers, and Goonesinha's gift for powerful invective made him a popular hero....Goonesinha used the occasion of the strike for anti-British propaganda....and, in tones reminiscent of Anagarika Dharmapala, he made derogatory references to "whites" who "eat the flesh of animals and drink brandy."

We must therefore allow that these working class protests drew considerable strength from nationalist emotions — all the stronger because these feelings were so different in character from the restrained expressions of most of the politicians in the Ceylon National Congress. Their protests may even have been subsumed by such nationalist feelings. It is not clear and not illustrated that these activists perceived themselves to be challenging capitalists and capitalism (as distinct from "privileged classes," an amorphous term carrying several different connotations). If anything, the evidence suggests that defiance of the British authorities, nationalism, and the drive for political power received greater attention than the defiance of employers and the assault on capitalism. At the inaugural meeting of the All-Ceylon Trades Union Congress, for instance, the resolutions passed and the speeches made by Goonesinha and other office-bearers "reflected a greater interest in political issues than in purely trade union matters."⁶ In the second place, for such events to be treated as witness

4. *Ibid.*, p. 254.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 246.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 278.

to matured working class consciousness, one needs evidence of continuing linkages and sustained solidarity. A strike may be a serious event. But it is also a holiday from work. A "holiday feeling," a "jaunty spirit" and the singing of *baila* have been a commonplace in most strikes in Ceylon. Much more significant were the linkages established by bands of workers in different establishments in 1912, 1923, 1927 and 1929. Nevertheless, the question remains whether their comradeship and these linkages were maintained; or whether they were occasional responses which did not survive the heated moments which produced them. Undoubtedly the Ceylon Labour Union (b. 10 September 1922), the Ceylon Labour Party (b. 15 October 1928) and the All-Ceylon Trades Union Congress (b. October 1928) provided an institutional framework for the continuation of these links; and such organs as the *Virayā* and the *Kamkaru Hañda*⁷ must have perpetuated class feelings. Kumari Jayawardena notes (p. 278) that in "forming a Trades Union Congress, Goonesinha hoped to group together all the existing unions which were affiliated to the Ceylon Labour Union, and to encourage other sections, including white-collar workers, to form unions affiliated to the Trades Union Congress, which would become a single, powerful representative of the island's non-agricultural population." The degree to which this goal was achieved is not clarified directly, but chapter twelve leaves one with the conclusion that it was not. And while there is some evidence to indicate that certain segments of the manual workforce in Colombo were beginning to look on other parts of society with hostility and to perceive "a privileged group" in opposition to themselves,⁸ the question remains whether these feelings were either widespread or deep-seated.

Since Kumari Jayawardena does not include this query within her principal interests we are provided with little information regarding the terminology, conceptualization, and political symbolism used by the activist workers or those (other than Goonesinha) who sought to influence the workers; and are not given a clear vision as to whether these activists saw themselves as irrevocably pitted against a capitalist system. My own researches, by way of a brief glance at some of Goonesinha's newspapers in 1929, produced a mixed bag of evidence. There were some essays or news items⁹ which attacked employers (*swāmiyō*) or *dhanavatum*; and one S. P. Rupasinghe wrote a piece under the banner:

Is the Poor Man a Slave of the *Dhanavata*?

Isn't the Labour Party Capable of Governing a Country?

7. A. E. Goonesinha is registered as the proprietor of the *Kamkaru Handa* (1925-31) as well as the *Viraya* or *Veeraya* (1929-48) in the declarations under cap. 179 which are now with the Archives. There is no information on their circulation in this source.
8. V. K. Jayawardena, 1972, pp. 244-48.
9. *Kamkaru Hañda*, 28 April 1929 and 12 May 1929; and *Viraya*, 6 Sept. 1929. The word "dhanavatum" might be interpreted as "capitalist", but one needs to study the usages in the late 1920's before arriving at a conclusion regarding its meaning (for it could be read as "the wealthy"). In the 1930's the L.S.S.P. used the word "dhanapati" to describe capitalists.

On the other hand, much of the writing is in terms of the two oppositions, *dhuppatā* and *dhanavatā* (or *dhanahimiyā*), that is, the poor man and the rich man.¹⁰ Significantly, Rupasinghe maintained that the main aim of a worker's government was the provision of welfare for all;¹¹ while an editorial in the *Kamkaru Hānda* claimed that public opinion was made up of the opinions of both the rich and the poor. Thus "the appeal to the poor against the rich" was not so much "as proletarians but as men with little property and status who would like to have more."¹² Goonesinha himself told the tramcar workers that they must attack the oligarchic tendencies of the (existing) political leaders and that freedom was desired not only by the notables (*prabhān*), but also by the poor (*dhuppatuntat*).¹³ Again, beginning from 6th September 1929, Goonesinha presented a series of 28 editorials in the *Virayā* on the subject of "*Jāti Ālaya*" (Love of Nation or Race). The *Virayā's* motto itself was a quotation from Parakrama Bahu, while one of Goonesinha's supporters likened him to the mythical saviour of the Sinhala, Diyasena.¹⁴ While such a brief reconnaissance cannot, of course, support a conclusive verdict, it does seem that the working class leaders had not come to see the capitalist class as an embodiment of "all the evils in society" and "a general obstacle and limitation" in the way of social progress.¹⁵ Their objectives were, it appears, to find a place in the centre for the under-privileged and the working class rather than to demolish the capitalists (or the rich). And nationalist emotions obviously girded and threaded their aims and activities.

Such evidence, aided and abetted by other pieces of evidence in Kumari Jayawardena's work and in other sources, led me to the conclusions referred to above, viz. that the working class was fragmented and was as yet motivated and bonded by a tenuous degree of class consciousness.

In the first place, there were operative a host of factors which could not but have hindered the extension of links between members of the working class.¹⁶ Striking proof of one influence is provided by the facility with which the communal cry raised by Goonesinha (and others) in 1929-and-thereafter evoked considerable response among the Sinhala working class. The day is surely past when any serious scholar can contend that communal and racial loyalties among the masses are solely due to the machinations of evil leaders

10. E.g. *Viraya*, 4 Sept. 1929 and *Kamkaru Handa*, 13 and 29 January 1929.

11. Rupasinghe: "Katat podu yahapata sālasima" (*Viraya*, 4 Sept. 1929) and *Kamkaru Handa*, 20 January 1929.

12. Quotation from L. J. Rudolph, 1961, p. 285 where it is applied to the Dravidian movements (DK and DMK).

13. Speech at inaugural meeting of Tramcar Workers' Union of 4 Jan. 1929 reported in the *Kamkaru Handa*.

14. *Viraya*, 27 November 1929.

15. From Marx's *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction* (1844) in Z. A. Jordan, 1971, p. 281.

16. *Infra*, pp. 10-29.

On the other hand, much of the writing is in terms of the two oppositions, *dhuppatā* and *dhanavatā* (or *dhanahimiyā*), that is, the poor man and the rich man.¹⁰ Significantly, Rupasinghe maintained that the main aim of a worker's government was the provision of welfare for all;¹¹ while an editorial in the *Kamkaru Hānda* claimed that public opinion was made up of the opinions of both the rich and the poor. Thus "the appeal to the poor against the rich" was not so much "as proletarians but as men with little property and status who would like to have more."¹² Goonesinha himself told the tramcar workers that they must attack the oligarchic tendencies of the (existing) political leaders and that freedom was desired not only by the notables (*prabhān*), but also by the poor (*dhuppatuntat*).¹³ Again, beginning from 6th September 1929, Goonesinha presented a series of 28 editorials in the *Virayā* on the subject of "*Jāti Ālaya*" (Love of Nation or Race). The *Virayā*'s motto itself was a quotation from Parakrama Bahu, while one of Goonesinha's supporters likened him to the mythical saviour of the Sinhala, Diyasena.¹⁴ While such a brief reconnaissance cannot, of course, support a conclusive verdict, it does seem that the working class leaders had not come to see the capitalist class as an embodiment of "all the evils in society" and "a general obstacle and limitation" in the way of social progress.¹⁵ Their objectives were, it appears, to find a place in the centre for the under-privileged and the working class rather than to demolish the capitalists (or the rich). And nationalist emotions obviously girded and threaded their aims and activities.

Such evidence, aided and abetted by other pieces of evidence in Kumari Jayawardena's work and in other sources, led me to the conclusions referred to above, viz. that the working class was fragmented and was as yet motivated and bonded by a tenuous degree of class consciousness.

In the first place, there were operative a host of factors which could not but have hindered the extension of links between members of the working class.¹⁶ Striking proof of one influence is provided by the facility with which the communal cry raised by Goonesinha (and others) in 1929-and-thereafter evoked considerable response among the Sinhala working class. The day is surely past when any serious scholar can contend that communal and racial loyalties among the masses are solely due to the machinations of evil leaders

10. E.g. *Viraya*, 4 Sept. 1929 and *Kamkaru Handa*, 13 and 29 January 1929.

11. Rupasinghe: "Katat podu yahapata sālasima" (*Viraya*, 4 Sept. 1929) and *Kamkaru Handa*, 20 January 1929.

12. Quotation from L. J. Rudolph, 1961, p. 285 where it is applied to the Dravidian movements (DK and DMK).

13. Speech at inaugural meeting of Tramcar Workers' Union of 4 Jan. 1929 reported in the *Kamkaru Handa*.

14. *Viraya*, 27 November 1929.

15. From Marx's *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction* (1844) in Z. A. Jordan, 1971, p. 281.

16. *Infra*, pp. 10-29.

(in this case, by implication, Goonesinha).¹⁷ The masses and the urban proletariat were not the lumps of clay which this argument makes them out to be. In a very real sense, Goonesinha was surely responding to emotions emanating from below, from the Sinhala rank and file in his political associations. These Sinhala men and women, in common with Goonesinha, had been subject to folk-tales drawn from the *Mahavamsa* from their childhood days. The anti-Indian and anti-Tamil ideology embedded as a significant strand in Sinhala literature had been evoked and stoked up by the protagonists of the Sinhala-Buddhist revival since the latter part of the nineteenth century. The Anagarika Dharmapala's populism and revivalism, with its pacans to the "sons of the soil," had as one of its corollaries a vilification of the Moors, the British, and all foreigners.¹⁸ Other writers and publicists in the Sinhala media consistently plied the same chauvinistic note. The "gallows" (cheapest seats) at the Tower Hall were an obvious point of inspiration for such feelings. Besides the content of the plays produced by such playwrights as John de Silva and Charles Dias, one found the former expressing his "gut feelings" before the performance of his plays in an abusive speech in which the Tamils, the Moors and those who aped the West were roundly castigated.¹⁹ In brief, a number of racial bogeymen and demons had been created. The assaulting of Indian railway workers by some indigenous railway workers in 1912-13 and the attacks on Moors in Colombo during the riots of 1915 indicate that workers were influenced by such racial antipathies.²⁰ Piyadasa Sirisena continued to express anti-Indian sentiments during the 1920's²¹ and the question of extending the franchise brought the Indians into the limelight after 1927. Such ethnic prejudices and loyalties have been among the factors contributing towards the fragmentation and proliferation of trade unions in Ceylon right up to the present day.²²

Secondly, when one focuses on the arena of class conflict and the line of demarcation between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, it can be suggested that the working man's perceptions on these points were ambivalent and blurred. On this hypothesis the boundary between these two social groups was obscured, and class conflict in the Marxist sense assuaged, by two factors: one, the concomitant prevalence of a whole range of status distinctions deriving from a combination of wealth, life style, occupation and traditional (pre-British) norms;²³ and two, by the prevalence of casteism, communalism, and

17. For an analysis of a similar problem, relating to whether the British were responsible for communalism in India, see Louis Dumont, "Nationalism and Communalism" in his recent collection of essays, 1970, chap. 5.

18. A. Guruge (ed.), *Return to Righteousness*, Colombo: The Govt. Press, 1965, p. 541 (and also for his populism, pp. 510-12, 528, 535 and 537); V. K. Jayawardena, 1972, pp. 169-71 and Sarath Amunugama, 1973, *passim*.

19. Amunugama, 1973, p. 273.

20. V. K. Jayawardena, 1972, p. 174 and Roberts, 1970a.

21. Personal communication from Mr. A. W. H. Abeyesundere (interview on 1 Sept. 1974).

22. Kearney, 1971, pp. 24-25 and *passim*.

23. For elaboration see *infra*, pp. 12-13 and S. J. Tambiah, 1963, pp. 61-63. For background information see chapter 9 in Obeyesekere, *Land Tenure in Village Ceylon*, C. U. P., 1967, and Roberts, 1973.

nationalism (both Ceylonese nationalism and sub-nationalisms rooted in race and language). Since these aspects receive elaboration in the next sub-section, I will confine myself to two illustrations of the manner in which these two factors worked symbiotically to obfuscate the lines of conflict between working man and capitalist.

Status distinctions centering around education and life-style were an integral feature in Ceylonese society and gave rise to status-conflicts. Because the Westernised elite were perceived as a Christian group, such status-conflicts partially interfused with the religious clash between Buddhism and Christianity. Thus the boundary between two opposed categories, "the Have's" and "the Have-not's," did not necessarily correlate with the boundary between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. To some, the "Have's" were the British sahibs and the Western-educated, Christian Ceylonese. Thereby, the "Have-not's" became a residuary category, which included those segments of the bourgeoisie who were not Western-educated, who did not sport the Western habit, and who were Buddhist (e.g. many *mudalalis*). A variant of this kind of stereotype is illustrated graphically in the stylized caricatures adopted by Piyadasa Sirisena²⁴ in his popular fictional novel, *Jayatissa and Rosalin* (which ran into several editions and sold 25,000 copies). Sarachchandra sees in this novel an attack on the upper class. Yet the privileged upper class were conceived in terms of the Buddhist-Christian confrontation of the day. In all his novels, Sirisena's "main purpose was to convert Sinhalese Christians back to Buddhism, and to resuscitate the dying culture of the people."²⁵ As Sarath Amunugama has stressed, this novel was "a rejoinder to Christian polemical novels...and especially to Isaac de Silva's *Happy and Unhappy Families*."²⁶ The villains of his piece were Catholics, Catholics who were de-nationalised and also involved in drug-peddling and kidnapping. "Thus, in Sirisena's novels, Catholicism, anti-national activity, and criminality converge." Religion became "a line of political demarcation."²⁷ His novels were also infused with Xenophobia and represented a frontal assault on Westernisation. Yet, for all that, the new dispensation sought by Sirisena

24. Pedrick de Silva alias Piyadasa Sirisena (1875-1946) was from Aturuwella, Induruwa (along the south-western coast) and of Goyigama stock. Initially an assistant in a furniture store, he became a Sinhala journalist as a protégé of H. S. Perera. He began the *Sinhala Jatiya* circa 1903/04 and also edited Dharmapala's *Sinhala Bauddhaya* at one stage. He was a propagandist for the temperance movement in the 1910's and a member of the Ceylon National Congress, Lanka Maha Jana Sabha and Sinhala Maha Sabha in subsequent decades. Also a well-known Sinhala novelist. Details from author's interviews with Dr. Malalasekera, Martin Wickremasinghe, Piyasena Nissanka and others; and Kalukongnave Pannasekera, *Sinhala Puvat Pat Sangaya Itihasaya*, vol. 3, Colombo: M. D. Gunasena & Co., 1967, pp. 148-57; and *Sri Lanka National Republic Day Exhibition* compiled by the Dept. of National Archives, 1972.

25. E. R. Sarachchandra, 1950, pp. 92-112 espe. pp. 92 and 102.

26. Amunugama, 1973, pp. 247 and 252-53.

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 253-54 and 130-31. Cf. One Charles Domingo's reaction in Nyasaland in 1911: "There is too much failure among all Europeans in Nyasaland. The three combined bodies, Missionaries, Government and Companies or gainers of money, do form the same rule to look upon the native with mockery eyes.... the life of the three combined bodies is altogether too cheaty, too thefety, too mockery," quoted in Boyd C. Shafer, 1972, p. 291.

was not a traditionalistic order. The norms which guided one of his heroes, Jayatissa, were not an "ideal drawn from pristine Buddhism." They were achievemental and this-worldly, activist and missionary, and inspired by revivalist nationalism. And as Amunugama concludes, Jayatissa's "goals" were "identical to those of the Buddhist bourgeoisie."²⁸ If we grant that such themes had some influence on the skilled and unskilled Sinhala labourers in Colombo, it can be seen how their consciousness of class lines in the Marxist sense could have been diluted by a different framework of categorisation.

Again, the colonial context must have impinged on the images and categories influencing the workers. Both skin colour and the imperial-colonial relationship coalesced to distinguish the white, imperialist rulers from the rest, that is, from the blacks, the "natives," the ruled. The bourgeoisie was differentiated along the lines of colour. This distinction was kept in the forefront by the nationalist activities and the vociferous propaganda conducted by segments of the Ceylonese bourgeoisie and members of the Western-educated elite. This propaganda was disseminated in English as well as the vernaculars.²⁹ As members of the Ceylon National Congress and the Lanka Maha Jana Sabha during the 1920's, a few working class activists were evidently drawn into these activities.³⁰ As a hypothesis it can therefore be suggested that many workers viewed the indigenous elite and the brown bourgeoisie, both moderates and radicals alike, in some sense as "their leaders" engaged in a struggle against a foreign foe. On this reading Goonesinha's criticisms of the moderates and his success in winning working class support in Colombo represent a modification of this image rather than its rejection: on certain issues most of the indigenous politicians constituted one front.³¹ On issues concerning Buddhists and Buddhism, such moderates as D. B. Jayatilaka, W. A. de Silva and J. N. Jinendradasa were as likely to have been accepted as their leaders by the working poor as Goonesinha was. On the vital questions pertaining to the status of the Indian immigrant labourers, there can be little

28. Amunugama, 1973, pp. 18-19 and 256-65.

29. From 1919 the Lanka Maha Jana Sabha and its branches functioned as the vernacular media and as mobilisation agencies for the Ceylon National Congress. Discussions in Sinhala occasionally took place at the conferences of the Congress (e.g. *Ceylon Morning Leader*, 23 Dec. 1924 and *Ceylon Daily News*, 19 Dec. 1931); and in any event the conferences attracted the attendance of personnel from such bodies as the Ceylon Workers' Federation, the Ceylon Labour Union, the Mallika Kulangana Samitiya, the Colombo Vehiclemen's Union and the Galle Ayurvedic Association. Newspapers such as the *Swadesha Mitraya* were also used for mobilisation of opinion. For some details see Roberts, 1970b, *passim* and *Handbook CNC*, 1928, pp. 332-35, 412-14 and 718-23.

30. E.g. M. M. Pinto and J. A. Edirisinghe (Ceylon Workers' Federation), D. D. Marshall Appuhamy (Ceylon Labour Union), W. A. Hendrick Singho and D. M. Manoratne (Colombo Vehiclemen's Union). There were others as well.

31. Hence the continued presence of the Young Lanka League and the Ceylon Labour Union as affiliates of the Ceylon National Congress during the 1920's. Though Goonesinha resigned from the Congress in October 1929, he appears to have associated himself with the Congress in 1932. See minutes of the 26 October 1929 in DNAL, 60 40 and CDN, 16 May 1932 for a report on the special sessions. Again, on the constitutional issue arising from the Bracegirdle case, the Congress, Labour Party, L.S.S.P. and Sinhala Maha Sabha were as one. From 1928-30 virtually all the Sinhala-dominated political associations, except for the parties of the Left, followed similar nationalist policies on the Indian immigrant question.

doubt that the politicians in the Ceylon National Congress and other Sinhala associations were regarded as their leaders by the Sinhala proletariat and petit-bourgeoisie; and, till he was forced into a volte face around 1929, Goonesinha must have lost *some* ground among the Sinhala working class as a result of his early, non-racial stance. Nationalism directed against the alien immigrants or against the British, therefore, served as a link between workers and masters.

A case in point is that of the successful carters' strike in Colombo in August 1906.³² The strike arose in protest against a new municipal regulation which prohibited carters from sitting upon any part of the cart while driving their carts. Involving 5,000 carters, it "paralysed the commercial activity of the city" and forced the municipality to revoke the by-law. While mentioning the support provided by the Ceylonese-owned newspapers and the leadership given by John Kotelawala (1865-1908) among the factors responsible for the success of the strike, Kumari Jayawardena lays greatest emphasis on (i) the militancy and solidarity of the carters and (ii) "the active support they received from the working class population of Colombo." Yet one must give equal attention to the support provided by the brown sahibs: support financial, support vocal in the English press and the Municipal Council, and support directional in the person of John Kotelawala. Kotelawala was not only an educated *chandiya* (tough), but also an official in the Plumbago Merchants' Union, a plumbago dealer, a timber merchant and a cart contractor.³³ Besides Kotelawala, there were numerous transport contractors, plumbago producers, plantation owners and merchants with a material interest in the dispute — among them Don Philip Alexander Wijewardene who had an interest in the contract to supply carts and bulls to the Colombo municipality.³⁴ At the same time these entrepreneurs were part of an elite that was in the throes (amidst other trends) of a cultural awakening which found expression in such associations as the Ceylon Social Reform Society (founded 1905) and which had set the stage for reformist or nationalist postures and demands. The assaults on arrogant Europeans which such able-bodied men as Kotelawala and Dannister Perera Abeyawardena indulged in³⁵ were a part of a general tendency: the defence of national honour and a reaction against the psychological subordination of colonial rule.³⁶ In the circumstances, Kotelawala's leadership of the carters must be interpreted as an indication of underlying and overarching support from a significant segment of the Ceylonese elites; a segment which

32. V. K. Jayawardena, 1972, pp. 122-30.

33. Arnold Wright (comp.), *Twentieth Century Impressions of Ceylon*. London: 1907, pp. 604-06. Hereafter *T. Cent. Imp.*

34. *Ibid.* 1907, p. 514. He was the contractor to supply carts and bulls to the municipality by 1907 and was said to have 400 workmen engaged in this work.

35. V. K. Jayawardena, 1972, p. 126 and my personal knowledge of Galle folk-lore.

36. See *Handbook CNC*, 1928, pp. 508 and 678 and typed copies of speeches made by E. T. de Silva, c. 1918 (?) and 13 October 1923 (with Mr. E. A. G. de Silva) for illustrations. Also see Amunugama, 1973, pp. 127-28, 141, 186-190, and 267. Cf. Peter Worsley, 3rd edn., 1971, pp. 24 ff.; Boyd C. Shafer, 1972, pp. 275-76 & 281-89; and Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 1967.

saw no occasion to support the British authorities in defence of a meaningless regulation which defied tradition and endangered their trading interests; and which was quick to take up any opportunity to present, in the Governor's words, "a demonstration against constituted authority."³⁷ Kotelawala was no maverick. T. H. A. de Soysa contributed "a large sum of money" towards the carters' strike.³⁸ As a journalist observed, "the Colombo Merchants" assisted the carters:

The cartmen...have gained support and pecuniary assistance from wealthy and influential quarters and from leading men in the City who have also been brought to look-upon this by-law as a wanton and mischievous endeavour on the part of the authorities to deprive the cartmen of a privilege they have always enjoyed.³⁹

The support given by the *Ceylon Independent* (owned by Hector Van Cuylenberg) was matched by the *Ceylon Standard* which, at this time, was in the hands of a number of Karavas from Moratuwa (J. G. C. Mendis, J. W. C. de Soysa and F. J. Mendis). Significantly, the Karava *arrivistes* were at the hub of the reformist pressures which were initiated in the period 1905–1908;⁴⁰ and another leading interest 'group' in the constitutional reform movement and its reformist nationalism during this period were the Goyigama *arrivistes* represented by such families as the Jayewardenes of Grandpass in Colombo, the Hewavitarnes, the Tudugalage Wijewardenes, and the newly-evolving Attygalle-Kotelawala-Senanayake fraternity.⁴¹

Working Class Consciousness: Restrictive Influences

In assessing the strengths and weaknesses of any working class movement, its identity, solidarity and class consciousness together constitute an important dimension. In one of his uses of the class concept, Marx linked it inseparably to the subjective element of class consciousness. Thus, as Hobsbawm sums up this usage, "class in the full sense only comes into existence at the historical moment when classes [begin] to acquire consciousness of themselves as such."⁴² Marxist theory also distinguishes two levels of consciousness among the proletariat, with the "lower level" being described by Lenin as "trade union consciousness" and the higher level as "socialist consciousness" (or "Social Democratic consciousness"). From this distinction Hobsbawm draws the following conclusion:⁴³

37. Quoted in V. K. Jayawardena, 1972, p. 130.

38. Letters and reminiscences from Sir Wilfred de Soysa conveyed to Mr. Sunimal Fernando, 1963. This same source also refers to A. J. R. de Soysa's contribution to the railway workers as a consequence of the strike in 1912; a fact which V. K. Jayawardena has derived from other sources (1972, p. 155).

39. *Ceylon Standard*, 16 August 1906. Also see editorials and news items of the days 14th August to 18th August inclusive. Re the ownership of this newspaper see *T. Cent. Imp.*, 1907 p.p. 313 and Ferguson's *Ceylon Directory for 1906*.

40. P. V. J. Jayasekera, 1969, chap. 2 and K. M. de Silva, 1973, p. 385.

41. See P. V. J. Jayasekera, 1969, chap. 2 and Roberts, 1970b and 1974a.

42. Eric Hobsbawm, "Class Consciousness in History" in Istvan Meszaros (ed.), 1971, p. 6.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

[Trade union consciousness] is (as Lenin also observed) the more spontaneously generated, but also the more limited. Without [socialist consciousness] the class consciousness of the working class is incomplete.

While Meszaros notes:⁴⁴

Group action devoid of strategically significant objectives can only strengthen 'group consciousness'—or 'trade union consciousness'—hooked on to the *partial* interests of a limited group of workers. In this it is *qualitatively* different from a group action [which creates a "crisis of authority"].

In terms of this theory, the evidence suggests that the working men in Ceylon were merely *beginning* to develop some measure of "trade union consciousness." It is doubtful whether they had even reached the level of the proletariat in France in 1848, where the "struggle against capital" was described by Marx as "a partial phenomenon"—largely because the French working class was "crowded into separate, scattered industrial centres, being almost lost in the superior number of peasants and petty bourgeois."⁴⁵ Certainly, there can be little doubt that the Ceylonese proletariat had not reached the stage of development wherein it was imbued with "the consciousness of the necessity of a fundamental revolution" and the need to "[rid] itself of all the muck of ages and become [fit] to found society anew."⁴⁶

Whether one accepts, or does not accept, these conclusions and my hypothesis that working class consciousness was diffused, segmented and inchoate, it is possible to delineate the factors which obstructed the development of working class associations and working class consciousness in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The relative weight which one should attach to each one of the factors is a more problematic question. In the final part of this article, therefore, I propose to enumerate a number of retarding factors without essaying a comparative analysis of their importance. In doing so some degree of repetition cannot be avoided.

✎ **One:** The spatial and cultural separation of the urban working class in Colombo and the other large segment of Ceylon's working population, the plantation labour force, is an obvious feature that has been widely noticed and has been recognised in Kumari Jayawardena's book as well.⁴⁷ The division was compounded by the largely-immigrant Indian composition of the plantation labour force and their continuing links with South India. Building bridges of working class unity across these chasms would obviously have been a considerable and complex task. The point need not be belaboured. It is best to narrow our angle of focus and to inquire after the factors which retarded the development of working class consciousness *in Colombo*.

44. In Meszaros (ed.), 1971, p. 100.

45. "The Class Struggles in France, 1848 to 1850," in *Karl Marx's Selected Works in Two Volumes*, Moscow: 1951, pp. 136-37.

46. Marx & Engels, *The German Ideology*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1938, p. 69.

47. E.g. 1972, pp. ix, 332 ff. & 357.

Two: Occupational distinctions within the working population and differences in life-style led to status distinctions of a hierarchical sort within the urban working class as a whole. The most pronounced gradation on these lines was that between the white collar, clerical workers and the manual workers. As Kumari Jayawardena observes, the white collar workers were associated with an "urbanized, middle-class pattern of living" and were influenced by aspirations "to integrate with the middle-class," thereby undermining "the more militant resort to direct action and trade unionism."⁴⁸ Yet she does not take its implications to their logical conclusion: namely, (i) the manner in which education, occupation, life-style and aspiration 'moderated' the development of class antagonisms between the working class and the bourgeoisie, and generated "class distinctions" based on status within the working class itself, thereby obstructing proletarian solidarity; and (ii) the problems created for the Marxist theory of class⁴⁹ by the increasing differentiation of occupation and the increasing complexity of social stratification, even in non-industrial societies: for, as T.B. Bottomore notes,

Stratification by prestige affects the class system, as Marx conceived it, in two important ways: first, by interposing between the two major classes a range of status groups which bridge the gap between the extreme positions in the class structure; and secondly, by suggesting an entirely different conception of the social hierarchy as a whole, according to which it appears as a continuum of more or less clearly defined status positions, determined by a variety of factors and not simply by property ownership, which is incompatible with the formation of massive social classes and with the existence of a fundamental conflict between classes. The relations between status groups at different levels are relations of competition and emulation, not of conflict.⁵⁰

Kumari Jayawardena's failure to pursue such implications, even briefly, derives in part from the fact that the manual workers of Colombo constitute the mainstream of her study. After the first chapter, the clerical workers are relegated to the background. That is where, in fact, they were. But she does not consider why this was so and why Goonesinha's brand of militancy and nationalism seems to have met with limited response among the white-collar workers. Indeed, she seems inclined to shunt them from the background to the margin and over the border: at one stage, and somewhat ambivalently, she refers to "the lower middle class of white-collar workers in government offices and mercantile firms."⁵¹ The ambivalence existed among the clerical workers themselves. Nevertheless, despite the ambivalence generated by

48. *Ibid.*, pp. 13 & 357.

49. In so far as we can evolve a systematic theory from scattered references. As widely recognised, there is no theory of social stratification in Marx's work. Marx died before he completed his *Das Kapital*; just at the point when he was going to embark on a theory of class formation. See Jordan, 1971, pp. 23-26.

50. Bottomore, 1970, p. 26.

51. V. K. Jayawardena, 1972, p. 26.

their status as Western-educated persons and their middle class aspirations, and the moderation infused in them by the presence of a large number of Burghers, the clerical workers of the early twentieth century must be viewed as part of the working class.⁵² Goonesinha himself formed the Ceylon Mercantile Union in 1928 and in later years the clerical workers provided a powerful constituent in the Left movement and its unions.⁵³ As such, their limited involvement in working class association and protest in the period before 1933 must be taken as evidence of status-segmentation ("stratification by prestige") within the urban working class and an indication that working class consciousness prevailed to a negligible extent within their ranks. With reference to the 1940's and 1950's, significantly though debatably, S. J. Tambiah includes the clerical workers within the "urban lower middle class:" and also refers to the limitations in their "internal solidarity" and their lack of "identification with the working class, from whom they dissociate[d] socially."⁵⁴ Again, in more recent times Kearney has found in "consciousness of rank and status" an impediment to common purpose among workers of different grades and a contributory cause for the proliferation of unions: "Within a single enterprise, one union commonly exists for manual workers, while skilled workers such as truck drivers and machine operators are organised in a second, and clerical workers are represented in a third."⁵⁵

Three: As Kumari Jayawardena notes, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the

urban economy was essentially a colonial one, with agency houses, commercial banks, insurance firms, transport agencies, and all the concomitants of export-import trade; in addition there were factories which processed and packed the plantation produce, engineering workshops, retail shops and service industries, and certain light industries. There were also a few industrial workshops geared to the maintenance of transport and repair of machinery to serve the plantation sector.⁵⁶

According to the criteria of "75 horse power prime movers or over" adopted by the Inspector of Factories, there were only 1171 "factories" in the island at the end of the year 1914.⁵⁷ As Table I will indicate most of these were tea and rubber processing factories in the hill-country. There were only 236 "factories" of this type in the Western Province,⁵⁸ in which a total of 13,000

52. As Kumari in fact *tends* to consider them. Here, I agree with her rather than with Tambiah.

53. V. K. Jayawardena, 1972, p. 290; and Kearney, 1966 and 1971, *passim*.

54. Tambiah, 1963, pp. 61-62. For brief glimpses of the influence of status considerations and of status incongruities in a specific plant during the 1960's, see S. Goonatilake, 1972, *passim*, *espe.* pp. 49-50.

55. Kearney, 1971, p. 23. Also Kearney, 1966, p. 401.

56. V. K. Jayawardena, 1972, p. 5.

57. *Administration Reports* 1914. Criteria derived from report in *AR* 1911-12.

58. Several of these "factories" would have been in the hinterland and not within the city or its outskirts.

TABLE 1: Regional Distribution of Various Categories of Power-Driven "Factories" in 1914 & 1923

1914									
Province	Tea Rubber Cacao	Coconut Fibre, Oil, etc.	Engi- nering and Saw Mills	Aerated Waters	Printing	Sundries incl. Manure, Spinning	Total	steam driven	electric
Central	580	—	7	3	—	4	594	148	36
Uva	114	—	2	1	—	—	117	37	4
Sab'wa	139	—	—	—	—	—	139	52	6
N. Western	15	32	—	1	—	—	48	26	—
Southern	29	3	2	2	—	1	37	20	1
Western	85	73	27	15	12	24	236	109	27
	962	108	38	22	12	29	1171	392	74
1923									
Central	600	—	11	4	—	2	617	76	58
Uva	125	—	2	1	—	—	128	24	8
Sab'wa	192	—	1	—	—	—	193	39	9
N. Western	17	52	—	—	—	—	69	20	7
N. Central	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	1	—
Southern	37	4	4	2	1	4	52	20	4
Western	91	109	50	14	11	34	309	121	51
	1062	165	68	21	12	41	1369	301	137

Source: Report of the Inspector of Factories, *Admin. Repts.* 1914 & 1923. These lists must not be viewed as comprehensive or accurate, but as near comprehensive samples.

"Factory": definition not clarified in 1914 but according to the report in the year 1911/12 the criterion seems to be "75 horse power prime movers or more."

persons were employed — an average of 55 per unit. In 1923 this figure was 309, with a work force of about 18,000 (an average of 58 per unit). To these we must add the numerous mercantile firms with large processing, packeting and export or import departments located in various parts of the island, but especially in Colombo. However the implication is clear: the growth of the city of Colombo was a product of merchant capitalism rather than industrial capitalism. It was an entrepot not a manufacturing centre. These basic characteristics conditioned both the size of the urban work force and the social milieu in which their work was performed. In consequence, as Tambiah notes for the 1950's, even more so for the era before 1933, the working class was "a truncated creature."⁵⁹

To illustrate this argument, a categorisation of the type of trades, industries and large establishments seems called for. The scheme below is presented with the rider that it is a list worked out by rule-of-thumb methods with only a partial reconnaissance into possible sources,⁶⁰ and with the further qualification that the categories must be treated as overlapping entities:

59. Tambiah, 1963, p. 62.

60. Namely: John Ferguson, 1903; Skeen, 1906; Wright (comp.), *T. Cent. Imp.*, 1907; Reports of the Inspector of Factories, *AR* 1908–1923; the trade and mercantile lists in Ferguson's *Ceylon Directory* for 1927; the occasional biographies of firms or family enterprises; and items of information in V. K. Jayawardena, 1972.

1. Workers and minor employees in administrative institutions run by the Government and by the Colombo municipality (including hospitals).
2. Transport services: including such groups of independent workers as rickshaw pullers, carters and tramwaymen; and government employees in the traffic department of the Ceylon Government Railway and in the Public Works Department.
3. The other service trades encompassing such "independent trades" as that of domestic servants, chauffeurs, tailors, hawkers, butchers, bakers and dhobies; salesmen, assistants and clerks in such establishments as those of the draper, the oilmonger, the general contractor, the restaurant owner, the timber merchants and the various categories of traders; craftsmen (carpenters, goldsmiths, masons, etc.); and, as a sub-category, the employees in large hotels, catering agencies and large merchant establishments (e.g., the Grand Oriental Hotel or Cargills Ltd.).
4. Engineering and transport workshops, foundries, and printing establishments, most of which would have had a substantial proportion of skilled workmen. Examples drawn from the 1900's would be the Fairfield Ironworks at Slave Island, the Ceylon Engineering Works run by C. A. Hutson & Co. at Mutwal, the workshops belonging to the Colombo Commercial Company and Walker, Sons & Co. Ltd., the railway locomotive workshops under the Government, the Government Factory at Norris Road (up to 1928), and the Royal Engineers' Department. There were also smaller establishments of the category represented by Martinus C. Perera & Sons or Fentons Ltd.
5. Light manufacturing trades and concerns, including dessicated coconut or coconut oil mills, textile mills, soap manufactories, and aerated water manufactories. Examples would be the Ceylon Spinning and Weaving Mills at Wellawatte, the "Hultsdorf (sic) Oil Mills and Manure Works" (Freudenberg's), the Pure & Aerated Water Manufactory and the various small production units (match manufactory, sawmills, furniture) operated by H. Don Carolis & Sons.
6. Export-import establishments involved in processing, packeting and shipping local produce or transmitting imported goods. This category would include those agency houses and firms with multiple interests such as the Colombo Apothecaries Co. Ltd., Freudenberg & Co., and Vavasseurs; those who concentrated largely on this field (e.g. the Webster Automatic Packeting Factory Ltd. at Union Place); specialist establishments such as the Ceylon Manure Works (1907; later Baus); and the several plumbago exporters (e.g. N. D. P. Silva and H. Bastian Fernando & Co.).
7. The harbour workers, both those employed by the Colombo Port Commission and the larger body of workers attached to the wharfage companies, ships' chandlers and other servicing establishments. The Colombo Ironworks, owned by Walker & Sons, which undertook repairs to ships and machinery

and was probably the largest industrial unit in the island in the 1900's, could be included within this category (though it falls within category 4 as well) because it was located within the docks.

On this foundation it is possible to focus on the extent to which these lines of development aided the concentration of large numbers of workers and encouraged an expansion in the number of skilled and literate workmen.

Of the categories listed, the total number employed was probably *the least* in categories 4 and 5 — precisely those areas in which skilled workmen were called for. But the more pertinent point for our purposes is that most of the establishments were essentially small enterprises. In the 1900's, the largest factories seem to have been the Colombo Ironworks and the Government Factory both of which had around 1,000 workmen.⁶¹ In 1906-07 the "Hultsdorf (sic) Oil Mills & Manure Works" and the desiccating mills at Veyangoda belonging to the Orient Co. Ltd. employed about 800 persons each, while the Ceylon Spinning and Weaving Mills at Wellawatte and the dubashers and ships' chandlers known as C. Mathew and Co. had about 600 on their rolls.⁶² We also know that there were 2,800 workers in the nine railway locomotive workshops in 1911. By that stage the work force at the Colombo Ironworks had risen to 1,700 and by 1923 that at the Wellawatte Mills had increased to 1,500 workers.⁶³ These, a mere handful, would seem to have been the largest establishments in the island. As the information tabulated in Table 2 would suggest, however, the work force at most of the large establishments would seem to have been about 200-440. The 327 men and boys employed by the Government Printer, the 300-400 hands at the tea processing and shipping "factory" maintained by Whittal & Co. at Mortlake in Slave Island, or the 250 labourers at the plumbago stores at Jawatte belonging to M. Arnolis Fernando⁶⁴ during the year 1906-07 would appear to represent a typical figure for the large enterprises of the day. On an impressionistic basis, however, it could be said that these enterprises were easily outnumbered by a host of smaller enterprises with work forces ranging from a mere handful to about 150. Moreover, a large segment of the labouring population in Colombo was made up of those in the independent trades,⁶⁵ falling largely within our categories 2 and 3.

In review, it is evident that the factory organisations in Colombo were limited in their size and that large factories or establishments were few in number. When one makes allowance for the gradations of occupation among the workmen, when one considers that a considerable number of women were employed in the large establishments listed within categories 3 and 6, and when one takes into account the ease with which recalcitrant or assertive

61. Skeen, 1906, pp. 30 and 74 and Ferguson, 1903, p. cxxvi.

62. *T. Cent. Imp.*, 1907, pp. 429, 446, 458 and 489.

63. V. K. Jayawardena, 1972, pp. 6-7 and 244 (also see pp. 178, 221, and 243 for figures of workers in the railway workshops); and Report of the Inspector of Factories AR 1911-12.

64. Report of the Govt. Printer, AR 1907, p. P 6; and *T. Cent. Imp.*, 1907, pp. 429 and 606.

65. V. K. Jayawardena, 1972, pp. 6-7.

workmen could be dismissed, it follows that the evolution of class consciousness in a work force of 200-400 would be a slow process. In dealing with the growth of a labour movement, therefore, one must not be content with an emphasis on the manner in which the development of factory-type organisations served as an essential precondition,⁶⁶ but must examine the nature of the "factories" that arose. Such an investigation could also utilise the visual perspectives provided by photographs of various factory-type organisations, with due allowance for the self-advertisement which motivated the photographs. Such visual aids, too, would suggest that the lay-out of several workshops and establishments did not have the grinding environment of large industrial concerns.⁶⁷

Besides their smallness of scale, the spatial dispersion of the mercantile establishments and industrial units within Colombo appears to have been quite marked. The growth of Colombo was characterised by ribbon development and some measure of disorderliness. It was a sprawling, agglomeratively expanding city.⁶⁸ Though it would need the skills of a geographer and an essay in historical geography to establish such a hypothesis, it appears that the large establishments had not taken root in one locality. While there were some concentrations around the Beira Lake and the Slave Island locality, and in San Sebastian, Maradana and Hulftsdorp, the maps provided by Skeen and Ingram (some factories marked), column four in Table 2, and the details embodied in Table 3 suggest that the large establishments were widely distributed.⁶⁹ In 1907 N. D. P. Silva had plumbago stores at two different sites in Colombo. So did Jacob de Mel. While H. Bastian Fernando had three. A firm like H. Don Carolis & Sons had its furniture works in Slave Island, its steam mills near Galle Face, and its main establishment in the Pettah.⁷⁰ Again, most workers in categories 1, 2 and 3 (see above, p.14) were invariably in dispersed situations. Merchant capitalism based on raw materials also fostered the processing of products in the producing areas so that many factory-units were located in the interior of the island. The principal exception to this characteristic was the Colombo harbour. It is an exception that proves our contention. It was surely no accident that Goonesinha's main source of strength lay among the harbour workers. Not skill, nor literacy, as much as a large aggregation of workers in one locality, it can be argued, sponsored those elements of working class consciousness and militancy which the harbour workers were to display from the 1920's. Concentration facilitated association and provided the power of numbers which a single firm of 300 or 600 workers

66. V. K. Jayawardena, 1972, pp. x-xi, 133 and 357-58. Other factors are also taken note of by the author.

67. For examples see *T. Cent. Imp.*, 1907; L. J. B. Turner, 1922, pp. 64 and 75; S. E. N. Nicholas, 1933, p. 39. Also for the new Govt. Factory at Kolonnawa, *AR* 1928, Public Works.

68. See N. M. Ingram, 1931. I am also grateful to Dr. B. L. Panditharatna for giving me the benefit of his views.

69. Also see John Ferguson, 1903 and N. M. Ingram, 1931.

70. *T. Cent. Imp.*, 1907, pp. 476-78, 594-98 and 600.

TABLE 2: Work Force in Some Establishments in Colombo, c. 1900-07
mostly from data in Wright's *Twentieth Century Impressions of Ceylon*

<i>number employed**</i>	<i>type of unit</i>	<i>name of firm</i>	<i>location of unit/units</i>
1000†	eng. foundry	Government Factory	San Sebastian
1000†	eng. foundry & ship repairs	Colombo Ironworks	Fort & port area
800	oil mills and manure	"Hultsdorf Oil Mills & Manure Works"	Hultsdorp
250	furniture works	H. Don Carolis & Sons	S. Island & Pettah
750	all units together		
600	textile manu.	Ceylon Spinning & Weaving Mills	Wellawatte
600	ships' chandlers	C. Mathew & Co.	port area
350-400	engineering	Colombo Commercial Co.	S. Island
120	Colombo Lead Mills		
60	storage depts.		
530-580			
500	p.p.u. (3)	N. D. P. Silva	Panchikawatte and Kotahena
500	p.p.u./other stores	Jacob de Mel	Hunupitiya & Grandpass
400	p.p.u. (2)	W. Johanis de Mel	Kanatte
400	p.p.u. (2)	H. Bastian Fernando	Borella & B'pitiya
327*	printing	Government Printer	Fort
300-400	tea exports	Whittal & Co.	S. Island
300-400	p.p.u. (2)	W. A. Fernando	Jawatte & Cin. Gdns.
350	booksellers and merchandise	H. W. Cave & Co.	Fort
350	engineering	C. A. Hutson & Co.	Mutwal
300	coaling	Krahwehl Coal Co.	port area
300	outfitting estab.	Colombo Apothecaries Co.	Fort
300	oil mills	G. H. Shaiktyab	Grandpass
200-300	mills	Victoria Mills	S. Island
250	p.p.u.	Gabriel Fernando	Colpetty
200 ^b	carriage builders ^a	H. M. Moosajee	S. Island
200†	p.p.u. (2)	John Kotelawala	Kanatte and Panchikawatte
200	p.p.u.	L. B. A. de Silva & Co.	B'pitiya
150	carriage builders	A. Pate & Sons	S. Island
150	p.p.u.	R. Miranda & Sons	?
150†	merchants	T. A. J. Noorbhai & Co.	xxx
125	p.p.u.	D. D. Pedris	Hunupitiya
100	p.p.u.	W. J. & A. P. de Mel	Kanatte
100	p.p.u. (2)	J. H. Arseculeratne	Maradana & Hunupitiya
100	p.p.u.	Mirando & Co.	Dematagoda
100	engineering	Fairfield Ironworks	S. Island
100	curing shed	Gabriel Fernando	Hunupitiya
80-100	caterers	Rustomjee & Co.	Fort
70-80	tea stores	Galaha Ceylon Tea E. & A. Co.	S. Island
75	jewellery	D. F. de Silva & Co.	xxx
75	jewellery	J. N. Ramsammy & Bros.	xxx
70	office staff	Freudenberg & Co.	?
70	p.p.u.	U. D. S. Gunasekera & Co.	Maradana
60	photo studios	Plate & Co.	Colpetty
53	office staff	Adamaly & Co.	Pettah
50	p.p.u.	S. D. S. Gunasekera & Co.	Borella
50	gem factory (only)	O. L. M. Macan Markar	?

(Table 2 contd.)

<i>number employed**</i>	<i>type of unit</i>	<i>name of firm</i>	<i>location of unit/units</i>
50	imp-exp stores	Arthur J. Fernando & Co.	Pettah
50	soft drinks	Pure & Aerated Water Manufactory	S. Island
50	packing	C. M. Wright & Co.	Ambewatta
45	drapery	F. X. Pereira & Sons	Pettah
42	retail store	Miller & Co.	Fort
30	tailors & outfitters	E. Cahill & Sons	Fort
25	merchant & drapery	S. L. Naina Marikar	xxx
Colombo plus branches			
1300	transport eng.	Walker, Sons & Co. Ltd.	Fort, etc.
600	merchants and retail store	Cargill's Ltd.	Fort, etc.
Elsewhere			
800	dessicating mills	Orient Co. Ltd.	Veyangoda
300	manure imports	Ceylon Manure Works	Kelaniya
200	mills	Orient Co. Ltd.	Madampe

Notes: ** For the most part, the figures must be viewed as approximate.

p.p.u. refers to a plumbago processing unit.

xxx at several retail points.

* Information from the Report of the Govt. Printer, *AR* 1907.

† from George Skeen, 1906, p. 74.

†† from John Ferguson, 1903, p. cxxvi and George Skeen, 1906, p. 30.

a It is not clear whether this figure refers to the head offices at Karachi or the branch in Colombo. It appears that this firm was also moving into the dubasher's trade in the port of Colombo (Wright (ed.), *T. Cent. Imp.*, 1907, p. 492).

TABLE: 3 Distribution of 'Factories' in the Wards of Colombo, 1910/11

	<i>Slave Island</i>	<i>Colpetty</i>	<i>Mara-dana</i>	<i>St. Sebastian</i>	<i>New Bazaar</i>	<i>Fort</i>	<i>Pettah</i>	<i>Kotahena</i>	<i>Total</i>
Sawmills & Furniture	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	3	5
Aerated Water & Ice	8	1	1	1	1	—	3	—	15
Ironworks & Foundries	5	—	—	2	—	2	1	1	11
Packing, Sorting & Baling	10	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	13
Lead	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Grain crushing	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
Oil mills	—	—	—	—	3	—	—	1	4
Fibre & Dessicating mills	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	2
Elec. power station	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1
Printing	—	—	—	1	—	8	2	—	11
Bulk petroleum	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
Sundries	1	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	3
	28	4	3	5	4	11	7	7	69

Source: *AR*, 1910/11, p. F. 2.

lacked. It is the importance of working class concentrations that suggests the need to look beyond the size of factories and to encompass the additional possibility that class consciousness may have been sponsored by conglomerations of small establishments in one area, or by the life-style and milieu of working class residential districts and shanty towns. For this task we need a historical geographer who is prepared to cater to these specific demands.

Four: Though some of the European agency houses and European companies stood out along the industrial skyline, so to speak, many large-scale establishments in Colombo were of a familial type, operated by their founders or owners as a private company or a family proprietorship. Besides the illustrated details available in the *Twentieth Century Impressions of Ceylon*, other self-congratulatory descriptions of these type of family firms can be found in H. L. de Mel's story of his firm and in A. M. Ferguson's description of a plumbago processing unit at Brownrigg Street which was operated by W. Andris Fernando in the 1880's and which employed 120-150 men and women.⁷¹ A work force of 50-150 men and women probably represents the size of most such establishments. The engineering and electroplating establishments known as C. Jinasena & Co. and C. Martinus Perera & Co., the carriage-builders A. Pate & Son, the export merchants Arthur J. Fernando & Co., the packing firm C. M. Wright & Co., the drapers F. X. Pereira & Sons, and several of the plumbago processing units and stores in Colombo may be taken as typical examples.⁷² We have little information on the manner in which labour was recruited to these establishments, but there is room to suppose that kinship links and caste affiliations had some influence. In other words, patron-client networks came into play both in the recruitment and the regulation of labour. The ties between employer and employee were not simply contractual and instrumental; the cash nexus was often supported by what have been described as "affective ties" based on mutual trust and a reciprocal exchange of services (however unequally).⁷³ These may have derived from connections of caste or kin, or simply that of personal friendship between the employer and an X acting as patron and intermediary for employee Y. The small scale organisation of so many establishments also encouraged the persistence of face-to-face relations between workers and managerial staff, thereby reinforcing the instrumental and affective controls. In several instances these bonds were strengthened by the fact that the enterprises had been hived out by *mudalalis* and entrepreneurs who had put their hands to the trade themselves at one time. Several wealthy entrepreneurs were former *baases* (foremen) or *mudalalis* who had come up the hard way. Typical examples would be M. Arnolis Fernando of Angulana and Bogala, H. Don Carolis

71. H. L. de Mel, 1924 and A. M. Ferguson, 1885, pp. 234-39.

72. *The Light of Reason*, vol. 1 : 5, Jan. 1918, pp. 102-13 and *T. Cent. Imp.*, 1907, pp. 485-86, 480 and 594 ff. Martinus Perera also appears as a temperance worker and a "radical" in Kumari Jayawardena's work (1972, pp. 95-96, 112, 126, 140, and 210 n.).

73. See James C. Scott, 1972, and the essays by Adrian C. Mayer and Eric Wolf in Michael Banton (ed), 1966.

Hewavitarne, Don Philip Tudugalagē Wijewardene, and A.W.P. Don Davit de Silva of Galle.⁷⁴ Several Sinhala capitalists also recognised traditional customs: for instance, a present to each workman before the Sinhala New Year, long leave during this period, and devil-dancing ceremonies to exorcise the spirits in plumbago mines.⁷⁵ As a recent investigation of the history of the Bogala enterprise has gathered through interview techniques, the first and second generation of owners (M. A. Fernando and, then, his sons J. A. Fernando Snr. and E. P. A. Fernando) seem to have maintained closer relations with their workmen than the third generation.⁷⁶ In such an establishment, in the 1910's and 1920's, a strike was virtually inconceivable and impossible – particularly when one takes into account the ease with which employees could be dismissed. H. L. de Mel's boast (in 1924) that the family mines, plantations and business concerns had not witnessed any strike in their 53 years of existence⁷⁷ was not a meaningless statement. But the reasons for such a state of affairs were more complex than the self-congratulatory argument that he was peddling. Hitherto it was the fashion to describe these relations as "paternalistic,"⁷⁸ but the more recent descriptions of patron-client relationships provide a more sophisticated analysis of the bonds that prevailed. James C. Scott defines the "exchange relationship between roles" identified as a patron-client relationship in the following terms:⁷⁹

a special case of dyadic (two-person) ties involving a largely instrumental friendship in which an individual of higher socioeconomic status (patron) uses his own influence and resources to provide protection and or benefits for a person of lower status (client) who, for his part, reciprocates by offering general support and assistance, including personal services, to the patron.

Among the distinguishing features in such a relationship are: (i) its basis in inequality, and the fact that the patron is in a superordinate position; (ii) the operation of some measure of reciprocity; (iii) its face-to-face personalised character; and (iv) its "diffuse flexibility." The latter refers to the fact that the links between patron and client are not singular or "simplex," but plural

74. See M. Anthony Fernando, 1936; *T. Cent. Imp.*, 1907, pp. 476–78, 486–89, 514, 606–09 and 659–61; and Roberts, 1974b, p. 565. Cf. conditions in several industrialising towns in Britain during the first half of the nineteenth century "where much industry was for long carried on in small concerns where the master worked alongside his hands and there was a natural union of thought and purpose," (G. Kitson Clark, *An Expanding Society*, C.U.P., 1967, pp. 40–41).

75. Information derived from conversations with Messrs. R. H. de Mel and Rex A. Casinader. Also observe the occasional photograph of office staff and proprietors in *T. Cent. Imp.* 1907; for e.g. pp. 487 and 488.

76. Rex A. Casinader, "The Graphite Industry in Sri Lanka: A Historical Sketch of its Mining Methods and Organisation," *Ceylon Studies Seminar*, mimeographed paper, no. 52, December 1974.

77. H. L. de Mel, 1924, p. 3.

78. Wertheim, 1964, p. 254. While referring to the "easy-going mentality" of the relationship between master and worker in such establishments, however, Wertheim underlines the exploitative aspects: "conditions often prevailed which demanded from the workers a practically unlimited amount of work for a minimum reward."

79. Scott, 1970, p. 8.

and "multiplex;" so that their interaction is a "diffuse, whole-person" relationship as distinct from explicit, impersonal contract bonds. Such multiplex relations "[cover] a wide range of potential services" and, particularly where the ties of mutual affection are strong, "the very diffuseness of the patron-client linkage contributes to its survival even during rapid social change."⁸⁰

In sum, then, the familial organisation patterns in so many establishments, the small-scale of the "factory" units, and the operation of patron-client networks and traditional bonds in the regulation of labour amounted to a powerful force which hindered the development of class consciousness among the manual and clerical workers of Colombo and generally moderated class conflict in the city's mercantile and industrial concerns.

Five: As commonly recognised, many workers retained links with their villages and long leaves of absence were not uncommon.⁸¹ The railway network with Colombo as its nodal point (there were no bus services till the 1920's) permitted some workers to commute from relatively distant points, particularly along the K. V. and Coast lines.⁸² Others walked 4 or 5 miles to work from suburban hamlets.⁸³ The dormitory zone of Colombo still bore the air of a rural environment and, with some exceptions, presented a sharp contrast to the equivalent areas in the industrial cities of Europe. Several workers could therefore escape to a familiar environment after hours of labour. Their habit of life remained predominantly rural. Their socialisation into the norms of a proletariat and their intensity of commitment to proletarian interests must invariably have been retarded — the more so in those instances where they retained a share in some piece of land which gave them the status of being a landowner. One can surmise that such links would have provided the possibility of returning to one's village and thereby sapped the will to fight it out for better labour conditions. At the very least a certain duality in life-style and roles must have been accepted⁸⁴ which could not but moderate their self-perceptions and dilute their sense of identity with the working class. This duality of roles may also have been connected with a parallel dualism —

80. Scott, 1970, pp. 3-5 and 1972. Also see Adrian C. Mayer, "The Significance of Quasi-Groups in the Study of Complex Societies" in Banton (ed.), 1966, pp. 97-122 and Alex Weingrod, 1968, pp. 1142-58.

81. V. K. Jayawardena, 1972, pp. 11-12. Also note Ryan's comments on the Embattoo (typically barbers) caste in the Low-Country: "These people...have tended to follow their traditional occupation, not infrequently following it in cities but maintaining their village residence and ties. Men interviewed in one village locality...were practically all migrant barbers or men employed as barbers in the coastal towns" (1953, p. 121; also see pp. 114, 116 and 118).

82. Cf. John Ferguson, 1903, pp. cxxi-ii.

83. V. K. Jayawardena, 1972, p. 12. For the environment see Skeen, 1906 and Ingram, 1931.

84. Here I draw on examples from modern times and a discussion on this subject during Bryce Ryan's talk on "Pelpola Revisited" at the Ceylon Studies Seminar, 23 January 1970, arising from the instance of some urban workers in Colombo who travelled every day to Colombo from their home village, Pelpola (5 miles to the interior from Kalutara). Cf. W. F. Wertheim, 1964, pp. 176-80 and 249-50; R. S. Khare, 1970; and N. R. Sheth, 1968, pp. 69-71 and 86.

the existence of status considerations which encouraged emulative tendencies at the same time that economic conditions and political influences stimulated hostilities to the privileged.

Six: In direct contradiction to certain assertions presented by Kumari Jayawardena,⁸⁵ I would postulate the hypothesis that caste loyalties must have had a restrictive and weakening influence on working class solidarity. The acceptance of Goonesinha's leadership by workers from "higher castes" is no proof against this view. This is not a case of "either... or." The fact that certain forms of caste interaction were dying out does not prove that other forms were suffering the same fate or that new facets had not developed. Caste was not an absolute bar to association in work-place, union or agitation. Its restrictive influence was occasional and partial; and occurred, one can conjecture, in at least two ways: (i) through the links and affinities which it created between owners and executives on the one hand and certain favoured castes on the other, which links could be activated by either party when the context or issue suited their use; (ii) in the lines of segmentation which they could stimulate within working class associations, sometimes in terms of a coalition of caste groups or as a nucleus of support around leaders engaged in personality conflicts. Indeed, one has to take into account the possibility that caste was of some use in the recruitment of workers. An assorted number of service castes gathered round Colombo and Galle in Dutch and British times. Besides the Salagama, Karava and Durava, Colombo had its quota of persons from the Wahumpura, Hena, Bathgam, Berava, Hunu, Badahala, and Embatta (Panikki) castes.⁸⁶ It is known that there were concentrations of Hena (Rada) in Polwatte within Kollupitiya as well as in the Kotahena area. A number of Wahumpura were employed in the harbour and they are said to have residential concentrations in such localities as Kehelwatte and Kuppiyawatte. These two localities were peopled by a "conglomerate of non-Goyi" according to one informant, and included a sprinkling of Hinna, Hunu and Salagama people. There were significant numbers of Salagama in the Modaramutwal area and a sprinkling in Borella, while the Durava concentrations were from Kollupitiya southwards and in the Thimbirigasyaya-Kirillapone locality. Hunu people were also found in Hunupitiya (Slave Island), Wellawatte and Kalubowila.⁸⁷ In such a context it is possible that A. E. Goonesinha's

85. V. K. Jayawardena, 1972, pp. 24-25.

86. This statement is based on the distribution of castes in "Colombo District" (i.e. Colombo Dissavany without Kalutara District) in the census taken in 1814-16. Together the castes enumerated in the latter part of the sentence numbered 16,541 and amounted to 14.1% of the Sinhala population in this sub-district. There were hardly any Hinna. Nor are the Hannali (tailors) even listed in this census or that of 1924-27. See *Return of the Population of the Maritime Provinces*, Colombo: Govt. Press, 1816; and that for Ceylon in 1827.

87. These observations are based on general knowledge, gossip, and an interview with Sir Senarat Gunewardene (27 July 1974). Also inferences from the Dutch thombos.

origins in the Hinna caste,⁸⁸ a service caste ranked lowly in the traditional hierarchy, may have been of benefit in the recruitment of certain workers to his cause. The numerical insignificance of his caste group may well have been an asset in that it enabled him to forge cross-caste links in a manner in which a leader from the more powerful non-Goyigama castes may not have been able to achieve. With Givendrasinghe and Reyal as his principal aides, moreover, he may have been able to gather support more easily from the Salagamà on the one hand and the Moor concentrations in the area covered by the present Colombo Central constituency⁸⁹ on the other.

The role of caste in political mobilisation is a sensitive subject for investigation and the historical data would probably not yield a definitive answer to the question whether it assisted A. E. Goonesinha's activities in a substantial or contributory way. But it is evident that Kumari Jayawardena's assumptions prevented any inquiries being followed on these lines. She has entirely missed the significance of caste in the solidarity revealed by the laundrymen who launched a strike in July 1896 against a municipal ordinance which inaugurated a system of registration (pp. 103-07). In normal circumstances a dispersed trade such as that of laundering would not be expected to support a powerful association even in the face of a common grievance. In this instance, caste affiliations and the *residential concentration* of many laundrymen at Polwatte provided the essential cement. This, of course, may be a special case. But there is little ground for the contention that "with urbanization and the creation of an urban proletariat there was a loosening of caste bonds," nor for her tentative conclusion that caste differences do not appear to have retarded trade unionism (pp. 24-25).⁹⁰ Experiences elsewhere and the comparative literature on the subject suggest otherwise. Migrants to urban environments have been widely witnessed to reveal a strong attachment to their primordial groups and to seek protection from new pressures through traditional linkages. At a symposium of the Association for Asian Studies held in 1960, for instance, it was "generally agreed" that urbanisation had "not yet destroyed the traditional associations based on family, caste, village origin, religion or language" and that, quite to the contrary, "some of these associational forms

88. This caste was traditionally associated with washing for the Salagama caste. Among villages with Hinna concentrations, Ampe, in the Kosgoda locality, is particularly well known. According to Ryan, they "are a relatively endogamous group of intermediate gradually rising position, eager to shed the recollection of former degradation, and hence reluctant to discuss their past or even their present," (1953, pp. 118-19). Numerically a small group, their percentages in the Maritime Provinces appear as 2.7 and 0.6 in the census statistics for 1814-16 and 1824-27 respectively (exclusive of Chilaw District).

89. In 1921 the Moors were especially numerous in San Sebastian and the Pettah (*Census of 1921*, p. 41). In 1953 the Moors and Malays constituted more than 40% of the population in the following wards; Grandpass (in Colombo North), San Sebastian, Slave Island, Maligakanda and Wekanda (B. L. Panditharatna, 1961, p. 84).

90. Indeed, Kumari Jayawardena's reference to the prevalence of name-changing (p. 25) is evidence of casteism. Name changing was probably not uncommon, but whether it enabled individuals to successfully hide their caste, as Kumari alleges, is more dubious.

[had] taken on new life and functions in the urban environment."⁹¹ The Indian situation has displayed the resiliency and adaptability of caste: for caste "has absorbed and synthesized some of the new democratic values" and "by reconstituting itself" as a caste sabha provided a channel "by which the Indian mass electorate has been attached to the processes of democratic politics;"⁹² or shown a remarkable ability to persist in interjacent fashion, mixing attention to kinship and commensal customs with allowance for achievement orientation, meritocracy, and the norms of modern bureaucratic organisation.⁹³ Again at an individual level, recent research has indicated how in Sri Lanka the traditional practice of sorcery still has a large number of adherents among relatively urbanised segments of the population.⁹⁴ These are all analogues. They undermine the author's assumptions, but do not establish the validity of the counter thesis for Ceylon. A recent study of an industrial organisation in an urban setting, however, indicates that particularistic caste linkages have some bearing on workshop interrelations even today.⁹⁵ It is anticipated that Bruce Kapferer's study of social distance in the town of Galle will provide a conclusive answer to this question.⁹⁶ As matters stand, however, the weight of the *indications* is contrary to the argument in Kumari Jayawardena's work and suggests the probability that persisting attachments to caste sentiments hindered the development of working class consciousness and the effectiveness of working class associations.

Seven: The ethnic heterogeneity of the city of Colombo was even more marked than that of the whole island because of concentrations of Indians, Moors, Burghers, Tamils, Malays and other minority groups within the urban area (see Table 4). The Sinhala constituted only 42 per cent of the males and 47 per cent of the population within the municipality of Colombo. These

91. Milton Singer, "Urban Politics in a Plural Society: A Symposium," *Journ. of Asian Studies*, vol. XX: 3, May 1965, p. 265. Also see Milton Singer and Bernard S. Cohn, *Structure and Change in Indian Society*, Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1968; W. F. Wertheim, 1964, p. 184; Frank F. Conlon, 1974; A. L. Epstein, *Politics in an Urban African Community*, Manchester University Press, 1958; and the several essays debating the theme "The Passing of Tribal Man" in the *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, vol. 5:1 & 2, 1970, espe. the articles by Plotnicov, Uchendu and J. Clyde Mitchell.
92. Rudolph and Rudolph, 1960, *passim*, quotations a mixture from pp. 5 and 22. However, for a perceptive comment which, among other points, asks for greater specificity in the enumeration of persisting traditions see Richard G. Fox, "Avatars of Indian Research," *Comp. Studies in Society & History*, vol. 12, 1970, pp. 59-72.
93. R. S. Khare, 1970, *passim*.
94. Gananath Obeyesekere, "Sorcery, Premeditated Murder and the Canalization of Aggression in Ceylon," mimeographed paper (due for publication in the *Ethnology* in 1975), espe. pp. 27-31. His sample of clients at sorcery shrines included several hospital attendants, a port worker, carpenter, weaver, etc. though the weightage was "middle class."
95. S. Goonatilake, 1972, pp. 42 ff., espe. 46, 48 and 51-52. Cf. N.R. Sheth, 1968, pp. 100-111.
96. Subsequent to the finalisation of the text, in a personal communication Bruce Kapferer observed that most working-class residents in Galle have a clear cognitive map of the residential clusters of various castes and that a chance encounter in Borella suggested that this was so in Colombo too.

329582

circumstances and the ideology of racialism and communalism⁹⁷ obviously retarded the growth of working class unity within Colombo and its environs. The existence of racial antipathies has already been illustrated. Theoretically, it can be expected that such feelings contributed towards groupings of workers along racial lines in much the same fashion that they have produced segmentation of trade unions in more recent times. In the early twentieth century, moreover, in several establishments the line of ethnic differentiation correlated roughly with the occupational and status distinction between skilled and unskilled labour. Thus, in the Colombo Commercial Company the "machine men" were Sinhalese, whereas the "coolies" were "Indian" or "Malabar."⁹⁸ It is general knowledge that large numbers of the conservancy workers and scavengers have been Indians. Such conditions could have encouraged the Sinhala workmen to maintain their status by emphasising the gulf between the two groups, besides encouraging the growth of racial stereotypes in their thinking imagery. In other words, the Indian labourer in Colombo may have become to the Sinhala workman what the Negro migrant has been to the white worker in the northern cities of the U.S.A., or what the Pakistani worker is to the British labourer today.

Besides providing various hindrances to working class combination, racial and communal feelings also provided cross-class linkages which blunted class conflict. The 1915 communal riots between the Sinhala and Moor peoples provide a good example. One dimension to these riots was the combination of ordinary Sinhala people (including workers) with certain Sinhala merchants and boutique-owners in bazaars and bazaar towns in an attack on Moor shops and Moors in general.⁹⁹ Indeed, it is this sort of evidence and the economic content in the preachings of Sinhala-Buddhist nationalists of this era which has led Sarath Amunugama to the suggestion that Sinhala Buddhist nationalism was a vehicle through which a segment of the rising capitalist class sought to extend their accumulation of capital by nobbling competitors and by means of which they diverted class antagonisms

97. Communalism has sometimes been described with reference to the solidarities built around a religion. Thus Dumont: "it is something like nationalism, in which the nation, so to speak, is replaced by the community. In other words, communalism is the affirmation of the religious community as the political group." (in 1970, pp. 89-90). Yet in Ceylon the emphasis in the Tamil and Sinhala cases has been on race and language, so that Sinhala Christians are encompassed by the ism which centres around the Sinhala and some Sinhala Christians have peddled such "communalism." The term seems to derive from the fact that the word "community" is used to describe the various races in the island; that is, it is used as an euphemism for "race." In this sense communalism is indistinguishable from nationalism and its extreme variants are a racialism. In Sinhala the same word can be used for "race" and "nation."

98. *T. Cent. Imp.*, 1907, p. 432. Also see Ferguson, 1903, p.cxxxviii re the harbour workers and Sir Edward St. J. Jackson, "Report of a Commission on Immigration into Ceylon," *Sessional Paper III of 1938*.

99. Roberts, 1970a, pp. 82 and 91-92. For fuller treatment, see P. V. J. Jayasekera, 1969, chaps. 4 and 5.

TABLE 4 : Racial Distribution of the Population in Colombo, 1911 & 1921

	Population within Colombo Municipality								Ceylon in percentages 1921	
	in figures				in percentages					
	1911		1921		1911		1921		males	total
	males*	total	males	total	males	total	males	total	males	total
1. Low Country Sinhala	.. 49,835	95,876	59,987	110,470	38.4	43.8	40.0	45.2	42.2	42.8
2. Kandyan Sinhala	.. 1,473	2,614	2,457	4,130	1.1	1.1	1.6	1.6	24.1	24.2
3. Sinhala	.. 51,308	98,490	62,444	114,600	39.5	35.0	41.7	46.9	66.3	67.0
4. Ceylon Tamils	.. 9,055	15,620	8,858	14,593	6.9	7.1	5.9	5.09	11.0	11.5
5. Indian Tamils	.. 29,272	37,558	30,224	39,560	22.5	17.1	20.2	16.23	14.0	13.4
6. Tamils	.. 38,327	53,178	39,082	54,153	29.5	24.3	26.1	22.1	25.0	24.9
7. Ceylon Moors	.. 13,297	24,827	13,777	25,417	10.2	11.3	9.2	10.4	5.5	5.6
8. Indian Moors	.. 10,885	13,853	11,242	14,275	8.3	6.3	7.5	5.8	1.1	0.7
9. Moors	.. 24,182	38,680	25,019	39,692	18.6	17.7	16.7	16.2	6.6	6.3
10. Europeans	.. 1,685	2,819	1,613	2,836	1.2	1.2	1.0	1.1	0.1	0.2
11. Burghers & Eurasians	.. 6,656	14,397	7,217	14,863	5.1	6.5	4.8	6.0	0.6	0.7
12. Malays	.. 2,836	5,456	3,099	5,852	2.1	2.4	2.0	2.3	0.2	0.3
13. Others +	.. 4,681	5,506	11,111	12,167	3.7	2.5	7.4	4.9	0.8	0.6
TOTAL	.. 129,675	218,526	149,595	244,163	100	100	100	100	100	100
14. Indian Origins ++	.. 44,187	54,666	51,149	63,886	34.1	25.1	34.2	26.2	—	—

* "Others" and Veddas in the categories used by the censuses.

++ "Indian Tamils," "Indian Moors" and "Others" born in India.

Sources: *Census of Ceylon* 1921, vol. I, part I, p. 191 for figures on which Ceylon percentages are based.

Ibid., vol. IV, table XI, pp. 166-68 and vol. I, part I, pp. 40 and 112.

Census of Ceylon 1911, table XXI, pp. 263-65.

* The figures for males are from table XXI in the 1911 Census. However, the totals for the males and females recorded in this table are not the same as those presented as the figures for 1911 in the 1921 census (pp. 40 and 112 of vol. I); for every category they are less than those recorded in the latter source. The latter is probably a more reliable set of figures and I have used it for the figures under "1911 Total." The discrepancy is not crucial because the purposes are comparative.

within their own establishments and within the Sinhala community.¹⁰⁰ More moderately, K. M. de Silva recognises the influence of the religious factor in the outbreak of the 1915 communal riots but also observes: "Since the low country Sinhalese traders were a powerful driving force within the Buddhist movement, religious sentiment gave a sharp ideological focus and a cloak of respectability to sordid commercial rivalry."¹⁰¹

Eight: The previous paragraph makes it evident that the border zone between communalism (in its Ceylonese form) and nationalism is a slender one. Sinhala communalism was, to its activists, nothing less than righteous nationalism. If distinctions are insisted upon, it nevertheless remains true that nationalism, in all its varied expressions, diluted the development of working class consciousness in the same way as communalism.¹⁰²

Nine: In so far as activism and militancy stimulated and moulded the evolution of working class consciousness, the variety of factors which obstructed activism must be taken into account. The most widespread and decisive of these factors, one which Kumari Jayawardena has underlined, was the facility with which assertive workers could be dismissed and replaced; and master-servant laws which enabled employers to prosecute striking workers for breach of contract.¹⁰³ Another general handicap was the labouring family's daily struggle to feed themselves. In the instance of workmen and clerks in government or municipal service, the weight of government regulations which forbade participation in political activities and membership in trade unions must have had some detrimental effects and been more restrictive than they have been in the last three decades,¹⁰⁴ though they do not appear to have fettered the railway workers a great deal.¹⁰⁵ Nor must it be forgotten that a considerable number of labourers were women. In some of the plumbago processing units, they even seem to have been in the majority.¹⁰⁶ They were an important, even predominant, segment in such trades as laundering, domestic service, millinery, rice pounding, itinerant trading, and biscuit making.¹⁰⁷ It follows that the burden of traditional norms, which assigned specific roles to women and demanded that they should not assert themselves in associational politics, must be taken into account. The norms were in the process of being eroded

100. Amunugama, 1973, pp. 73-75 and 109-14 and personal communication. This view seems rather extreme. Such goals were merely an additional and contributory motive force for the Buddhist revival. If one uses Time as a variable, it is possible to show that the Buddhist resistance to Christian evangelicalism dates from the 1840's, if not earlier; and that several individuals and Buddhist monks who were not connected with the rising bourgeoisie participated in the counter attack on the Christians. For some details see Malalgoda, 1973, and K. M. de Silva in U. C., *History of Ceylon volume III*, 1973, pp. 197-205.

101. K. M. de Silva, 1973, pp. 390-91; (and also, p. 201).

102. See *supra*, pp. 5-10 for illustrations.

103. V. K. Jayawardena, 1972, pp. x, 25-26, 245 and 323-34.

104. See Kearney, 1966, pp. 397-99. At the time of the strikes in 1946 and 1947 "trade union membership was forbidden for all public employees except casual daily paid labourers. Nonetheless, six unions representing other categories of public servants were functioning...."

105. V. K. Jayawardena, 1972, pp. 151 ff, 217 ff, and 242-43.

106. E.g. see the photographs of the plumbago sorting yards in *T. Cent. Imp.*, 1907, pp. 591 ff., Also see Rex A. Casinader, 1974.

107. See the occupational tables in any one of the censuses from 1901-1921.

and were not an absolute barrier to the assumption of new roles and expressions of militancy, as Goonesinha's cohorts of Mariakadē women indicated,¹⁰⁸ but they must have continued to exert a restrictive influence on female worker activism.

* * * *

The working class, therefore, was beset with a great number of handicaps and problems in seeking to improve its conditions of work and to assert its rights. In particular, the intensity of the workers' commitment to their class interest and their group identity appears to have been limited. My attempt at enumerating the factors responsible for this state of affairs must be treated as a set of hypotheses which need further investigation. Such an enquiry should also attempt to assign relative weights to the several factors which retarded and diluted working class consciousness, while distinguishing the spans of time during which the more influential factors were operative.

Bibliography of Works Cited

- Amunugama, Sarath L. B.
1973 : *Communications and the Rise of Modern Sinhalese Nationalism*, University of Saskatchewan: M. A. in Social Studies.
- Bandaranaike, S. W. R. D. (comp.)
1928 : *The Handbook of the Ceylon National Congress 1919-1928*, Colombo: H. W. Cave & Co. (abbreviated to *Handbook CNC*).
- Banton, Michael (ed.)
1966 : *The Social Anthropology of Complex Societies*, A. S. A. Monographs 4, Tavistock Publications.
- Bottomore, T. B.
1970 : *Elites and Society*, Penguin Books, edn.
1971 : "Class Structure and Social Consciousness," in Istvan Meszaros (ed.), 1971, pp. 49-64.
- Casinader, Rex A.
1974 : "The Graphite Industry in Sri Lanka: A Historical Sketch of its Mining Methods and Organisation," *Ceylon Studies Seminar*, no. 52 December 1974.
- Conlon, Frank
1974 : "Caste by Association: The Ganda Sarasvata Brahmana Unification Movement," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. XXXIII : 3, May 1974, pp. 351-65.
- De Mel, Sir H. L.
1924 : *Graphite or Plumbago in Ceylon and its Uses*, Colombo.
- De Silva, K. M.
1973 : "The Reform and Nationalist Movements in the Early Twentieth Century," in U. C., *History of Ceylon volume III*, Colombo Apothecaries Co. Ltd., pp. 381-407.
- Dumont, Louis
1970 : *Religion, Politics and History in India*, Paris: Mouton Publishers.
- Fanon, Frantz
1967 : *The Wretched of the Earth*, Penguin Books.
- Ferguson, A. M.
1885 : "Plumbago with special reference to the Position occupied by the Mineral in the Commerce of Ceylon," *JRAS CB*, Vol. IX, no 3, pp. 171-266.
- Ferguson, John
1903 : "Old and New Colombo" in his *Ceylon in 1903*, App. IV, Colombo: A. M. & J. Ferguson.

108. Referred to by Mr. James T. Rutnam (interview, 25 July 1974).

- Fernando, M. Anthony
 1936 : *Biography of Late James Alfred Fernando with a Life Sketch of His Beloved Father, Late Mr. M. A. Fernando of Methmedura, Moratuwa.*
- Goonatilake, Susantha
 1972 : "Environmental Influences on an Industrial Organisation in Ceylon," *Modern Ceylon Studies*, vol. 3 : 1, January 1972.
- Handbook CNC (see Bandaranaike)
- Hobsbawm, Eric
 1971 : "Class Consciousness in History," in Istvan Meszaros (ed.), *Aspects of History and Class Consciousness*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971.
- Ingram, N. M.
 1931 : "Colombo 1905-1930. Some Recollections and Changes," *Transactions of the Engineering Association of Ceylon for 1931.*
- Jayasekera, P. V. J.
 1969 : *Social and Political Change in Ceylon, 1900-1919*, London University: Ph.D. dissertation in History.
- Jayawardena, V. K.
 1972 : *The Rise of the Labor Movement in Ceylon*, Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press.
- Jordan, Z. A. (ed.)
 1971 : *Karl Marx: Economy, Class and Social Revolution*, ed. and with an introductory essay by Z. A. Jordan, London: Michael Joseph.
- Kearney, Robert N.
 1966 : "Militant Public Service Trade Unionism in a New State: The Case of Ceylon," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. XXV, May 1966, pp. 397-412.
 1967 : *Communalism and Language in the Politics of Ceylon*, Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press.
 1971 : *Trade Unions and Politics in Ceylon*, University of California Press.
- Khare, R. S.
 1970 : *The Changing Brahmans: Associations and Elites among the Kanya-Kubjas of North India*, University of Chicago Press.
- Malalgoda, Kitsiri
 1973 : "The Buddhist-Christian Confrontation in Ceylon, 1800-1880," *Social Compass*, vol. XX:2, pp. 171-200.
- Marx, Karl
 n.d. : *The Poverty of Philosophy*.
 1938 : *The German Ideology*, London: Lawrence & Wishart.
 1951 : *Karl Marx: Selected Works in Two Volumes*, Moscow.
 1970 : *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Selected Works*, Moscow: Progress Publishers.
- Meszaros, Istvan (ed.)
 1971 : *Aspects of History and Class Consciousness*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Nicholas, S. E. N.
 1933 : *Commercial Ceylon*, Colombo: Times of Ceylon.
- Panditharatna, B. L.
 1961 : "A Geographical Description and Analysis of Ceylonese Towns," *The Ceylon Jour. of Hist. & Soc. Studies*, vol. 4:1, Jan-June 1971, pp. 71-95.
- Roberts, Michael
 1970a : "Hobgoblins, Low-Country Sinhalese Plotters, or Local Elite Chauvinists?: Directions and Patterns in the 1915 Communal Riots," *Ceylon Studies Seminar: A Symposium on the 1915 Communal Riots* (1970).
 1970b : "The Political Antecedents of the Revivalist Elite in the MEP Coalition of 1956," *Ceylon Studies Seminar: 1969-70 Series*: no. 11, 30 August 1970.
 1973 : "Elite Formation and Elites in Ceylon, c. 1830-1930," in U. C., *History of Ceylon volume III*, Colombo Apothecaries Ltd., pp. 263-84.
 1974a : "Reformism, Nationalism and Protest in British Ceylon: The Roots and Ingredients of Leadership," *Ceylon Studies Seminar: 1974 Series*, no. 4, June 1974.

- 1974b : "Problems of Social Stratification and the Demarcation of National and Local Elites in British Ceylon," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, August 1974, vol. XXXIII: 4., 549-77.
- Rudolph, I. I. & Rudolph, S. H.
1960 : "The Political Role of India's Caste Associations," *Pacific Affairs*, vol. XXXIII: 4. Dec. pp. 5-22.
- Rudolph, L. I.
1961 : "Urban Life and Populist Radicalism: Dravidian Politics in Madras," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. XX:3, May 1961, pp. 283-97.
- Ryan, Bryce
1953 : *Caste in Modern Ceylon*, New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press.
- Sarachchandra, E. R.
1950 : *The Sinhalese Novel*, Colombo: M. D. Gunasena & Co.
- Scott, James C.
1970 : "Patron-Client Politics and Political Change," paper presented before the American Political Science Association. Sept. 1970 (mimeographed).
1972 : "The Erosion of Patron-Client Bonds and Social Change in Rural Southeast Asia," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. XXXII:1, Feb. 1972, pp. 5-38.
- Shafer, Boyd C.
1972 : *Faces of Nationalism*, New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich.
- Sheth, N. R.
1968 : *The Social Framework of an Indian Factory*, Manchester University Press.
- Skeen, George A. J.
1906 : *A Guide to Colombo*, Colombo: A. M. & J. Ferguson.
- Tambiah, S. J.
1963 : "Ceylon" in Richard D. Lambert and Bert F. Hoselitz (eds.), *The Role of Savings and Wealth in Southern Asia and the West*, Paris: Unesco.
- Turner, L. J. B.
1922 : *Handbook of Commercial and General Information for Ceylon*, Colombo: Govt. Printer.
- University of Ceylon (abb. U. C.)
1973 : *History of Ceylon, volume III*, ed. by K. M. de Silva, Colombo Apothecaries Co. Ltd.
- Weingrod, Alex
1968 : "Patrons, Patronage and Political Parties," *Comp. Studies in Soc. & History*, vol. 10, July 1968, pp. 1142-1158.
- Wertheim, W. F.
1964 : *Indonesian Society in Transition*, 2nd edn., The Hague: W. Van Hoeve & Co.
- Worsley, Peter
1971 : *The Third World*, 3rd edn., London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
- Wright, Arnold (comp.)
1907 : *Twentieth Century Impressions of Ceylon*, London: Lloyds Greater Britain Publishing Co.