

Workers' Ideologies – Trade Unionism, Socialism, and Marxism

With the social effects of industrialization, the lower classes looked for ways out of their plight. Trade Unionism and Socialism (Marxism and Revisionism) became the ideologies of the workers.

Trade Unionism -- accepts the economic system of capitalism but wants better wages and conditions for workers. In general, trade unions see their strength in collective action. Although one worker cannot fight the conditions of his employment, all workers in a factory or an industry, banded together, can. Trade unionist methods can include collective bargaining, strikes and boycotts.

Karl Marx argued that before the Industrial Revolution, the basic economic problem was **SCARCITY**, or producing enough goods (food, etc.) for everyone. This is called a **Productive Economy**. With industrialization, not only can enough goods be produced, but also a surplus is created. The basic economic problem in this **Consumptive Economy** (also called Post-Industrial Economy) is consuming all the goods that are produced. Social classes came from scarcity, as those with power concentrated the wealth in their hands and made others work for them for a small share of the goods. Now that we can over-produce, we can create a system in which the goods can be equally shared. Socialism and Marxism arise from this analysis.

Socialism -- does not accept the economic system of capitalism. Instead, it argues for an abolition of private property (collective ownership), and production and distribution based on "from each according to his ability; to each according to his need." Although all socialists accept these goals, they differ on the methods of achieving them.

Marxism -- believes that socialism can only be achieved through a revolution. Felix Gilbert outlined Marx's basic beliefs:

- 1) Every society consisted of classes determined by economic interests
- 2) Every political struggle was actually a struggle between different economic classes (or between capitalists of different nations for control of raw materials or markets)
- 3) Thus, no improvement of the economic situation of the workers could be expected without political revolution in which the workers would wrest power from the capitalist ruling group
- 4) Then the means of production would fall into the hands of the proletariat
- 5) Private property would be replaced by common possession of all goods
- 6) The results of labor could be distributed to the benefit of all
- 7) Everyone would receive according to his needs. "From each according to his ability; to each according to his need."

Marx thought that the revolution would be the expression of the popular will since he argued that capitalism increasingly concentrated wealth into fewer and fewer hands, forcing more and more people into the proletariat. Economic crises would increase which would create more need for the overthrow of the system. Since capitalism is international, the revolution would be also. "Workers of the World, Unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains!"

Revisionism -- agrees with much of Marxism but believes that socialism can be achieved by a slower, evolutionary process, often working through the parliamentary system. Revisionists worked for a greater electoral voice for the workers and more democracy. Since the workers would be the majority of the population, they would be able to elect a socialist government. Socialist members of parliament, even before a socialist government, could push for better wages, working conditions, education, and welfare for the poor. Revisionism was developed by Eduard Bernstein (1850-1932)

Quotations of Karl Marx

The Need for Revolution to Transform Society and the Proletariat

"For the creation on a mass scale of this communist consciousness, as well as for the success of the cause itself, it is necessary for men themselves to be changed on a large scale, and this change can only occur in a practical movement, in a *revolution*. Revolution is necessary not only because the *ruling* class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because only in a revolution can *the class which overthrows it* rid itself of the accumulated rubbish of the past and become capable of reconstructing society."

What is Freedom?

"If man is, by nature, a social being, he only develops his real nature in society, and the power of his nature should be measured not by the power of private individuals but by the power of society." (Holy Family, 1845)

"The realm of freedom only begins, in fact, where that labor which is determined by need and external purposes ceases; it is therefore, by its very nature, outside the sphere of material production proper...Beyond [the realm of necessity] begins that development of human potentiality for its own sake, the true realm of freedom. (Capital, 1887)

"In communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, production as a whole is regulated by society, thus making it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, raise cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, in accordance with my inclination." (German Ideology, 1845)

The Purpose of Ideology

"The ideas of the ruling class are, in every age, the ruling ideas: i. e., the class which is the dominant *material* force in society is at the same time its dominant *intellectual* force." (German Ideology, 1845)

"The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in different ways; the point is to *change* it." (Theses on Feuerbach, 1845)