

Development of Labour Movement With Time, Historical Analysis

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Abstract

In this article we have highlighted the huge history of Labour movement in short, starting from the era of Industrial revolution. Since working class and labour movement is connected with each other we have explain about how labour movement affects the working class with the passage of time. We have discussed about the Industrialization period and formation of labour Union. Which came into existence with the rise of class difference in the industrial societies, their struggle throughout the history has been tried to explain. We have also touched about the modern labour movement which modernizes itself with the new capitalist order.

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Introduction

To do a historical analysis of labour movement we have to understand the conditions in which formation of working class took place and for which reasons this class has formed. Working class and labour movement are interconnected. The consequences of class formation results in labour movement and labour movement tends to make stronger working class.

The history of labour movement is quite long and it is very difficult to merge in a short article but I will try to touch the main event and conditions in which working class and labour movement came into being starting from industrialization revolution period to modern day labour movements. What has changed in labour movement during the recent modern time and 3 centuries before? I will try to compare these changes and put forward a result that how successful the working class and labour movement have been until now. My objective is to research on this topic is to highlight the main events in simple ways so that one can easily understand the reasons and condition in which labour movement evolution took place. In this paper we will also discuss about the conflict of labour and capital in the light of historical events. The research consist of three parts, first one is industrialization period in which we have discussed about the conditions of working class, formation of labour unions

and suppressive rules of capitalist societies especially in Britain. In second part we tried to touch the historical events happened during the formation of trade Union and its effects on working class and individual labour. In third part we have discussed about the Modern labour movement. After WWI specially WWII when Soviet Union got more power. Workers all over world were seen as a threat by many capitalist oriented countries. With Marshall Plan labour Union and labour right demanding military wings was suppressed brutally.

1. Industrialization Period

In Europe most lands were control by feudal lord during 15th century, workers/farmers were not less than slaves. By the 17th century Britain soon became the centre for the world of banking, insurance and financial services, we can say that Britain become industrial nation after it becomes monetarist country.¹ In the last decades of 18th and 19th century something big started that changes the dynamics of whole world called the industrial revolution. We are talking about a time in which there is a shift from living in farms to living in cities, mass migration had started from villages to industrial cities so that workers can get jobs. it is time in which goods were started to make by machines rather than people It started in Britain because it had a big population at that time and of course more

¹ McCarthy, Terry. An Abridged History of the Trades and Labour Movement. Early work press, 2016.

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running water like rivers and other forms of large water resources, it was a in rich natural resources like steel and coal. Eventually the revolution started spreading in Europe and United states also. These countries are right now the richest countries in the world. So people started moving from countryside to cities to work in factories. The enclosure movement started also in this era and labourization get faster. Industrialization becomes ongoing process.²

From worse working conditions the worker had to fight for their rights which we can still see in world today, like minimum wage, age limit and maximum amount of work. New ways of organizing labour introduced with many modern machines which helped in industrial revolution in 19th century but machines still need lots of workers to operate the machines. Skill workers and unskilled workers were doing single similar tasks or unskilled workers also doing the same work and they had no platform to talk or negotiate to somebody about the conditions. There was no protection for workers. For example when workers came to cities the accommodation was highly expensive, workers were forced to stay in groups and the houses or rooms they living were in very bad conditions not even water was provided properly. So workers were getting sick more. Some workers were paid by checks which they can only use in the employee shop.

² Vries, Peer. (2008). *The Industrial Revolution*. Oxford University Press, 2008.

Workers were working 12 hours average or more in a day. In factories working conditions were so bad e.g. temperature, cleanliness etc.

When industrialization began to accelerate in Western Europe in the nineteenth century most of its countries had already experienced at least a century of "proto-industrialization".³ The factory honors were supporting some philosophers and social scientist who helps them keep suppressing workers rights for example Thomas Robert Malthus was an economist justified extremely low wages by his article Principle of population in 1798. He says that high wages labour will have more children's because of that food supply will be decreased and control of population will be more difficult. The workers didn't like these policies but British government instead of helping workers sided the owners of industries and bourgeoisies. Labour Unions started to form because of this oppressive behavior of government and upper class rich capitalists. Protests and demands increased, working class started to become a movement demanding their rights from bourgeoisie. But government was totally supporting the draconian system of suppressing workers so new laws were introduced with time such as Combination act 1799 which

³ Tilly , Richard. Industrialization as an Historical Process .European online history . Available at <https://d-nb.info/1020551631/34>.

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were basically against the labour union.⁴ If labours would be unified they will ask for their rights like minimum wage and working condition etc. But these actions of course didn't stop workers to continue their activities secretly. Luddites in Britain make huge voice for them; they were group of workers who were protesting and in first and second decade of 19th century. This protest or struggle started when Ned Ludd broke a machine which was supposed to do his work. By this act workers all over England started breaking machines and British police and Army forcefully tried to stop these people. In 1812 machine breaking act was introduced and brutally crushed luddites.⁵ In third decade of 19th century demand for workers right become increased and strikes and protest started all over Europe. As a consequence in 1833 the factory act ⁶ was introduced by government of England which prohibits child labour e.g. less than 9 years shouldn't have work. More acts came with time 1847 in which women and children couldn't work more than 9 hours a day and six day work days introduced.⁷ The working class didn't stopped and continues to

⁴ Shawl, William Frank, "The repeal of the Combination Acts 1824-1825" (1954). Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers. 8628. Available at <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd/8628>.

⁵ Hobsbawm E. J. The Machine Breakers. Oxford University press. Available at <http://web.csulb.edu/~ssayeghc/theory/wintertheory/machinebreakers.pdf>

⁶ 1833 Factory act. The National Archives. 1833. Available at

<https://nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/education/factory-actdoc.pdf>

⁷ Miller, Linda Karen. Child Labor In The Industrial Revolution. Fairfax High School, VA.

struggle for their rights. Workers for putting pressure on politicians started a movement named Chartism.⁸

In 1867 Reform act was passed by English parliament in which male workers get some basic right but only get applied properly with representation of people act in 1918.⁹ In Europe after Napoleon in early 19th century to middle of the century, new theories and philosophies were thrown, about distribution of wealth. Many theories like liberalism conservatism, socialism etc which brings lots of changes in social behavior of bourgeois as well as working class. While conservatives wanted to go back towards old orthodox characteristics of society while socialist wanted a new socio-economic structure which will bring more equality among people. With French revolution nationalism becomes the most famous ideology among them. The most attractive ideology for labour class was undoubtedly socialism. Hence in 1848 in Europe a revolutionary idea came into existence in the name of communist manifesto written by Carl Marx. At the end of 19th century labour class got many rights as compare to 60 years before.

⁸ Martin Lawrence History of the Working Class. The Garden city Press Lmt. London, 1932.

⁹ Himmelfarb, G. (1966). The Politics of Democracy: The English Reform Act of 1867. *Journal of British Studies*, 6(1), 97-138

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2. Labour Union And Politics

When we talk about labour Unions, the first think comes in mind is trade Union, conditions were terrible for workers so workers joined together and formed trade Union for mutual support and for better wages, the main weapon was to protest and stop working all together until employee accept their demands, Trade Union has deep connection with socialism. That's why combination act in 1800 banned trade union.¹⁰ That was lifted in 1824 because of huge workers pressure. The trade Union congress represents many trade unions started to participate in politics along with socialist parties. The idea was "government control markets" and all institutions so that equality prevails. Marx and Engels work on class differences made huge voice in societies that lead to October revolution led by Vladimir Lenin in Russia.

3. Modern Labour Movement:

The labour unrest increased before both WWI and WWII and decreased after WWII because after war the extreme nationalism tends to decline after war but gain momentum after some time passed with Marshall plan capitalism structure became more stronger started eliminating labour military

¹⁰ Shawl, William Frank, "The repeal of the Combination Acts 1824-1825" (1954). Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers. 8628. Available at <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd/8628>.

wings to confront loyalty of workers against Soviet Union. Bureaucratization of labour started.¹¹

This assessment is on a framework of workers movements, including social movement, trade unionism etc. The neo-liberalism, which was tried to be implemented since the mid-1970s, gained momentum in 1980s and in 1990. Privatization and similar policies alienated the traditional class relations between workers. The main function of the workers with a relatively high wage level were organized, full-time personnel was replaced by workers who had to work in small and medium-sized jobs where they cannot organize with working class easily due to unregulated work, the threat of unemployment, the links of workers have been weakened. It has directly influenced the formation of class consciousness. On the other side the bourgeois ideology got great success. In 1990 Labour movement gain momentum, there were protests in France against state policies of labour in 1995. Labour movement in 21st century is also not as active as expected. Labour movement cooperating with other social movements like feminism, environmentalism and human right activism but this help the cause as well as sometimes not so advantageous, these social problems are of very different extends and they

¹¹ Cox, R.W. Labour and Hegemony. International organization,31(3), 385-424.

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have different goals which lead labour unions to put their priorities on back seat sometimes.¹²

After 2008 economic crisis labour movements played their role and got some specific success especially in France England and Spain. In September 29, 2011, a general strike took place with the participation of many sectors such as mining, metal, electronics and automotive. Students and teachers of Universities and high schools are also actively participated. With the participation of 20 thousand people in Greece, especially Athens protest to pay for cuts, layoffs and accumulated salaries in public expenditure took place. The trade Union in this era is losing its ground because of increasing informal economies e.g. short contract etc and also due to number of workers in China and India after 1990 gradually increased the ratio between capital and labour decline and workers compete for jobs and opportunities which is indirectly a disadvantage for organizing trade unions.¹³

Conclusion

Global labour history will enable us to view international cooperation of a working class which was fighting for their right from centuries, these struggle got momentum slowly and

¹² ŞAHİN, Hande.. İşçi Hareketine Tarihsel Bir Bakış:Dünden Bugüne Yaşanan Dönüşümlerin Yapısal Bir Analizi. ISGUC, The Journal of Industrial Relations and Human Resources, 2015.

¹³ Van der Linden, M. Global labour: A not so good Finale and perhaps a New Beginning. Global labour Journal, 2016.

gradually getting better than before. 3 centuries earlier workers were no different than slaves but now it is changed somehow, from slavery to feudal/ serf relation and from bourgeoisie to proletariat relations it is getting better and we expect it to be get better in future more.

The labour movements have the potential to turn into a collective movement at any time even if they are shattered right now and even to expressing general dissatisfaction with the system. However, it should be emphasized that there movements should be collective class struggle. In addition it is not possible to talk about a single working class today, many other social problems are also being highlighted for example yellow belt protest going in France right now it is not a totally labour fight for rights, many other social aspects are also included. The labour movement will continue struggling until capitalist economic system will exist.

With the labour history we can explain and understand world more easily E.P. Thompson once said ‘Each historical event is unique. But many events, widely separated in time and place, reveal, when brought into relation with each other, regularities of process’.¹⁴

¹⁴ Thompson, E.P., *The poverty of theory & other essays*, Monthly Review Press, 1978

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