

Class Struggle as the Impact of Oppression Seen in Clifford Odets' *Waiting for Lefty*

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Abstract

Class struggle is one of the many cornerstones of Marxism. It can be defined as a collective effort of an oppressed class against the oppressor class to overthrow the throne of the oppressor class. In this case, the class of proletariat against the class of capitalists. The proletariat are engaged in this class struggle because they want welfare in their life. Waiting for Lefty, a play written by Clifford Odets which is often considered a masterpiece, has a theme related to class struggle. It talks so much about the gap that separates the two classes mentioned previously and also the oppression that comes along. This oppression is found in the form of economic and legal oppression and are responded by the oppressed class in the form of class struggle. The class struggle itself becomes a reality after the oppressed class experiences the class consciousness. The oppression and class struggle depicted in the play will be the main focus of this study. Thus, it will be relevant to analyze the class struggle as the impact of oppression in Waiting for Lefty by applying the theory of Marxism.

Keywords: *oppression, class struggle, Marxism*

Marxism and the Play

Many classes exist within society. Based on Marxism, there are two basic classes, which are the capitalists and the proletariat. The relationship between these two classes is contradictory to one another. In other words, there is a class antagonism within the society. These classes are in conflict because each of the classes has a different interest. They are incompatible. The first class, as the owner of the means of production, wants to maintain their position as the ruling class, which has complete control over the proletariat. Hence, the capitalists carry out the oppression of the proletariat in order to maintain their superior position. While the latter want to improve their life by insisting their rights, which according to them have been robbed by the capitalists. As a result, there is a class struggle within the society.

In *Waiting for Lefty*, Clifford Odets tries to represent this phenomenon. Odets tries to critique the condition of society and economic life as related to human rights by writing *Waiting for Lefty*. He stands behind the oppressed class that resists humanism in life. In this play, the oppressed class is represented by the group of taxi drivers. Odets fights against the oppression that is experienced by the proletariat, especially the economic aspects, which are caused by the arbitrariness of the employer and the despotism done by the government. *Waiting for Lefty* was chosen to be studied because some of the characters that are represented by the members of workers union, in this case the taxi drivers union and their relations, represent the struggle of an oppressed class against the ruling class. The ruling class is represented by the other

characters, the employer, his servant and also the industrialist.

The play is closely related to Marxism. The theory of Marxism is treated as the fundamental theoretical framework in this study. Although Marxism is considered as an old-fashioned theory, its emergence has influenced so many disciplines, for example economics, politics, cultural studies, etc. This play helps to explain the humanistic value about welfare for people. The conflict faced by the taxi drivers is very much so related to their economic life. In *Waiting for Lefty*, Odets describes the taxi drivers' problem in relation to their standard of living due to the small wages that they earn. At the same time, the industrialists exploit their employee because they think they have power over them. Profit is the only main objective of the industrialist's business. Proper wages should be given to all the workers in order to ensure the equality of welfare among the people. The people should have access to the rights they deserve. Many aspects found in the play *Waiting for Lefty*, including the equality of welfare that is demanded and struggled for by the working class, is worthy of further study and analysis. The classification within society will be the first thing to be analyzed in this study. The oppression carried out by the oppressor class will then be analyzed. The depiction of the class struggle will be the last analysis in this study. The writer hopes the study can give its contribution to the society in seeing the world in general, related to the equality of welfare that is supposed to be had by everyone without exception.

Class Divisions

The theory of social class is used to analyze the groups where the characters belong to. In Gary Day's *Class*, Marx called the class who owned the means of production the bourgeoisie and the class who sold their labour power the proletariat. According to Marx, the interests of these two classes were fundamentally opposed since the bourgeoisie, in order to make a profit, paid the workers the lowest possible wage while demanding that they attain the highest level of productivity (2001: 7). In Alan Swingewood's *Marx and Modern Social Theory*, Marx and Engels assert that our epoch, the epoch of the

bourgeoisie, possesses this distinctive feature: it has simplified the class antagonism. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: the Bourgeoisie and the Proletariat (1975: 115). In their *Communist Manifesto*, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels explain that bourgeois is a synonym of capitalist because both are the owners of the means of social production and the employers of wage labor (1967:79).

The Members of the Proletariat

By using the theory of social class based on Marxism, there are five characters that can be classified as the proletariat. They are Joe, Miller, Sid, Benjamin, and Agate. They work in the taxi company, selling their labour power in order to get money. They are totally dependent upon their employer because they do not own the means of production. Ironically, this situation is used by their employer to push them down.

Joe is a poor taxi driver who loves his family very much. As a father who has to be responsible to feed his family, he feels that the wage from his job as a taxi driver is not sufficient to meet the needs of his family. When the union, of which he is a member, is involved in the middle of a dispute, he is the one who is brave enough to provoke the others to strike.

JOE: ...What's this crap about goin' home to hot suppers? I'm asking to your faces how many's got hot suppers to go home to? Anyone who's sure of his next meal, raise your hand! A certain gent sitting behind me can raise them both. But not in front of here! And that's we're talking strike-to get a living wage! (Odets, 1994: 1789).

He is aware of his family's misery after being complained to by his wife, Edna. Edna grouses about the condition of the family that is near to the devastation. Being captured by the awareness of the fact that the taxi company treats his family, Joe's responsibility towards his family comes up so he decides to do some action to improve their condition.

EDNA: ...You got two blondie kids sleeping in the next room. They need food and clothes. I'm not mentioning anything else-But we're stalled like a flivver in the snow. For five years I laid awake at night listening to my heart pound. For God's sake, do something Joe, get wise... (Odets, 1994: 1790-1791).

Miller was a lab assistant who worked for an industrialist named Fayette before he worked as a taxi driver. He is a talented young man who likes a sobriety in his life. He feels bothered when he faces the same condition as his previous experience which exclusively concerns about the arbitrariness of the employer. He is fired from his job, regardless of his ability and talent, because he does not want to do a spying job.

FAYETTE: You understand the consequences?

MILLER: I lose my raise- Simultaneously

MILLER: And my job!

FAYETTE: And your job!

MILLER: You misunderstand-

MILLER: Rather dig ditches first! (Odets, 1994: 1795).

Sid is a taxi driver who fails to marry a woman he loves because he does not have sufficient money to build his own family. He thinks that people cannot live properly if they do not have money. In fact, he decides to break off his engagement with Flor because he cannot earn enough money to support their life when they get married. He is willing to give up the engagement that has been run for a long time without any effort to try to fix things right. Thus, Sid can be described as a man who gives up easily. This can be seen in the dialogue below.

SID: Hello, Babe.

FLOR: Hello. (For a brief time they stand as though in a dream.)

SID (finally): Good-bye, Babe. (He waits for an answer, but she is silent. They look at each other.)

SID: Did you ever see my Pat Rooney imitation? (He whistles Rosy O' Grady and soft-shoes to it. Stops. He asks:)

SID: Do not you like it?

FLOR (finally) : No. (Buries her face in her hands. Suddenly he falls on his knees and buries his face in her lap.) (Odets, 1994: 1799).

Benjamin is a talented Jewish person who used to be a doctor before he joined the taxi company as a driver. Similar to Miller, he also reveals the unfair treatment by his previous employer. He is replaced by Leeds, a nephew of the Senator. Although Benjamin is more competent, Benjamin is powerless to maintain his job regarding the fact that Leeds is the Senator's nephew. In other words, the employer has complete control over him, in spite of everything, including his talent.

BENJAMIN: It's important-excuse me-they've got Leeds up there in my place-He's operating on Mrs. Lewis-the historectomy- it's my job. I washed up, prepared...they told me at the last minute. I don't mind being replaced, Doctor, but Leeds is a damn fool! He shouldn't be permitted-

BARNES (dryly): Leeds is the nephew of Senator Leeds (Odets, 1994:1801).

Agate is the one who dares to incite the members of the union to strike after they wait for Lefty- the union leader- for a long time, but they cannot see him. He is proud to be a member of the working class. He is a hard worker. When he was eleven, his eyes got injured because the factory where he worked did not provide a shield to protect the laborers from injury. As a result, he has to wear glasses for the rest of his life.

AGATE: ...Maybe I got a glass eye, but it come from working in a factory at the age of eleven They hooked it out because they didn't have a shield on the works. But I wear it like a medal cause it tells the world where I belong-deep down in the working class! (Odets, 1994: 1804).

The negligence of Agate's previous employer is used by Agate to incinerate the spirit to do the strike because at the moment the members of the union also feel neglected by their employer, the taxi driver company. Agate always talks with a shrill voice, showing his seriousness and madness.

AGATE: ...This is your life and mine! It's skull and bones every incha the road! Christ, we're dyin' by inches! For what? For the debutantes to have their sweet comin' out parties in the Ritz! Poppa's got a daughter she's gotta got her picture in the papers. Christ, they make'em with our blood. Joe said it. Slow death or fight. It's war!...Working class, unite, and fight! Tear down the slaughter ouse of our old lives! Let freedom really ring (Odets, 1994: 1804).

The Members of the Capitalist Class

The capitalists are the opponent of the proletariat. They can fully control the employees or the workers because they have control over the means of production. There are two characters that can be included in the class of capitalists. They are Harry Fatt the corrupt leader and Fayette the industrialist.

Harry Fatt represents the taxi company. He is described as a wealthy person. He refuses the decision to conduct the strike. It is because Fatt already has a better life as a result of his corrupt leadership. Rather than supporting the union to strike to get a better life, he tries to prevent it. In fact, he provides examples of some strikes that met a dead end in order influence the union to not to strike. He is equally a “boss” and enemy of the workers, for his corrupt leadership subverts their struggle for a better life.

FATT: You're so wrong I ain't laughing. Any guy with eyes to read knows it. Look at the textile strike-out like lions and in like lambs. Take the San Fransisco tie-up-starvation and broken heads. The steel boys wanted to walk out too, but they changed their minds. It's the trend of the times, that's what it is. All we workers got a good man behind us now. He's a top man of the country-looking out for our interests-the man in the White House is the one I'm referrin' to. That's why the times ain't ripe for a strike. He's working day and night- (Odets, 1994: 1788).

He often uses the word “red” which refers to the communist and to everyone who

wants to strike in order to mock them. During this time period, communism is considered a bad ideology (Odets, 1994: 1788).

Fayette is a greedy and profit-oriented industrialist. As an industrialist, he has the authority to control his employee. Thus, he forces Miller to do a spying job. He argues that the job is necessary in order to serve the country but clearly the case of business is the one that is more significant to him.

MILLER (addressing his pencil) : They say 12 million were killed in that last one and 20 million more wounded or missing.

FAYETTE: That's not our worry. If big business went sentimental over human life there wouldn't be big business of any sort! (Odets, 1994: 1794).

He does not bargain with his employee. In the case of Miller, the options that Fayette offers are do the job or lose the job.

FAYETTE: You understand the consequences?

*MILLER : I lose my raise-
Miller : And my job!*

(Simultaneously)

FAYETTE: And your job!

MILLER: You misunderstand- (Odets, 1994: 1795).

The Oppression

Oppression is a widely used – and misused – term. Marxists, social democrats and some liberals all agree that something called “oppression” exists; that certain groups in society do not enjoy the full legal, political or economic rights enjoyed by others (www.anu.edu.au). Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels write that the modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society has not done away with class antagonism. It has actually established new classes, new conditions of oppression, and new forms of struggle in place of the old ones (Marx & Engels, 1967: 80). Modern bourgeois society means the capitalistic society because bourgeois refers to the class of modern capitalists, the owners of the means of social production and the employers of wage labor

(1967: 79). From the quotation above, it can be understood that oppression does exist in the capitalist society in which case the oppressor is the bourgeois or the capitalists. For Marx and Engels, no government or State is really above, or neutral in, the class struggle. Far from being impartial, the State is itself the historical product of class society. The State was established (and later its power expanded) because of the need of the dominant class for protection from the exploited (Roth, 1995: 161).

Economic Oppression

The need of money is covering the need of humanity if the subject is capitalism. As written by Tucker, capitalism crushes our particularly human experience. It destroys the pleasure associated with labor, the distinctively human capacity to make and remake the world, and the major distinguishing characteristic of human from animals (Tucker, 1978: 98). Therefore, economic factors play a great role in running the social life.

Joe provides us with an example. The wages from his job as a taxi driver cannot completely fulfill the needs of the family. Although he has been working very hard to feed his family, He is unsuccessful. It is because the company where he works is not concerned about the low wages, regardless of the economic condition of the employees. Hence, the oppression exists here. Here is the dialogue between Joe and Edna that expresses their miserable condition because of the company where Joe works.

JOE: Well, we're averaging six-seven dollars a week now.

EDNA: That just pays for the rent.

JOE: That is something, Edna.

EDNA: It isn't. They'll push you down to three and four a week before you know it. Then you'll say, "That's somethin'," too! (Odets, 1994: 1791).

The low wage given by the company is not fair, especially when the fact that Joe has driven all day long is not considered. It seems that the company does not care about the welfare of the drivers. As the family's economic situation keeps worsening, the

problems within the family keep increasing. In fact, Edna threatens Joe that, if their economic situation does not get better, she will leave Joe for another man named Bud Haas.

JOE: This is what I slaved for!

EDNA: Tell it to your boss.

JOE: He don't give a damn for you or me!

EDNA: That's what I say.

JOE: Don't change the subject!

EDNA: This is the subject, the exact subject! Your boss makes this subject. I never saw him in my life, but he's putting ideas in my head a mile a minute. He's giving your kids that fancy diseases calls the rickets. He's making a jelly-fish outa you and putting wrinkles in my face, This is the subject every inch of the way! He's throwing me into Bud Haas' lap. When in hell will you get wise- (Odets, 1994: 1793).

In the case of Sid and Flor and their problems in relation to getting married, economic factors also play a great role. They have a similar experience with Joe and Edna. The low wage given by the company to Sid makes him unable to start his own family, his own life. Their engagement is not supported by Flor's brother, Irv, or her mother. Irv mentions that the wage of a taxi driver is not enough to feed the family.

IRV: Mom told you ten times-it ain't him. It's that he ain't got nothing. Sure, we know he's serious, that he's stuck on you. But that do not cut no ice.

FLOR: Taxi drivers used to make good money.

IRV: Today they're makin' five and six dollars a week. Maybe you wanna raise a family on that. Then you'll be back here living with us again and I'll be supporting two families in one. Well...over my dead body. (Odets, 1994: 1796).

Sid and Flor reveal that the capitalists, the owners of the capital, deliberately desire the miserable condition of the proletariat. Hence, the oppression by giving the low wage is committed in order to obtain high profit. This oppression is a tool to maintain the

position of the ruler class that controls the lower class.

FLOR: But something wants us to be lonely like that-crawling alone in the dark. Or they want us trapped.

SID: Sure, the big shot money men want us like that.

FLOR: Highly insulting us-

SID: Keeping us in the dark about what is wrong with us in the money sense. They got the power and mean to be damn sure they keep it. They know if they give in just an inch, all the dogs like us will be down on them together-an ocean knocking them to hell and back and each singing cuckoo with stars coming from their nose and ears. I'm not raving Florrie-

FLOR: I know you're not, I know (Odets, 1994: 1794).

Agate the agitator is also oppressed by the taxi company. He feels that his work is merely to support the company instead of himself. He thinks that his life is robbed by the boss. Agate thinks that his poverty is caused by the greed of the company. Roth writes that oppression can be the result of a deliberate, conscious act, or it may be unconscious and unintentional yet still have oppressive consequences (1995: 632). The correlation between the two groups - capitalists and proletariat- is a contradictory, binary opposition. The capitalists are wealthy, secure, and have high status; meanwhile the proletariat is lacking a subsistence minimum. Thus, the act done by the company by providing a low wage, whether conscious or not, results in the oppressive consequences experienced by Agate.

AGATE: ...Hell, some of us boys ain't even got a shirt to our backs. What's the boss class tryin to do-make a nudist colony outa us?

...

AGATE: This is your life and mine! It's skull and bones every incha the road! Christ, we're dyin' by inches! For what? For the debutantees to have their sweet comin' out parties in the Ritz! Poppa's got a daughter she's gotta get her picture in the papers. Christ, they

make'em with our blood. (Odets, 1994: 1804).

Legal Oppression

As explained previously, the State exists in order to assist the capitalists to maintain their position. In Robert C. Tucker's *The Marx-Engels Reader (2nd edition)*, Karl Marx says that the State's objectives are transformed into objectives of the department, and the department's objectives into objectives of the state (1978: 24). Department refers to the part of the State namely enterprises. The enterprises belong to the capitalists. The State can exist because it is funded by the enterprises which pay the taxes. Thus, the State gives a special authority to the capitalists to control their workers because the profit they get will be higher. As a result, the taxes can be increased.

This oppression is called legal oppression because the State as the legal institution participates in this act of oppression. The State cooperates with the capitalists to oppress the proletariat. As the highest institution, the State is supposed to help the people for the sake of its obligation. In *Waiting for Lefty*, the State ironically abandons its people.

In the case of Miller, the State apparently legalizes oppression. It is because the spying job offered to Miller is a job in order to serve the country.

MILLER: May I ask the nature of the new work?

FAYETTE (looking around first): Poison gas...

MILLER: Poison!

FAYETTE : Orders from above. I do not have to tell you from where. New type poison gas for modern warfare (Odets, 1994: 1791).

Miller is also in the middle of oppression when Fayette questions how big his nationalism and patriotism are. Instead of serving the country in a right way, the loyalty to the country is measured by what you will do for your country to lift it up, no matter how you do it. Of course, if Miller rejects the job, the society where he belongs will label

him anti-nationalist. The people will definitely expel him from the society because of it.

FAYETTE: You're doing something for your country. Assuring the United States that when those goddamn Japs start a ruckus we'll have offensive weapons to back us up! Do not you read your newspaper, Miller?

...

MILLER: But sneaking-and making poison gas- that's for Americans? (Odets, 1994: 1795-1796).

The oppression towards Benjamin takes place when his position as a Doctor, who is going to operate on a patient, is ridiculously replaced by the hospital's director. In the end, Benjamin eventually gets fired. Although the replacement's ability is far from Benjamin's, Benjamin is powerless because the replacement is the nephew of the Senator, who has power over him. In this case, once again the State plays a big role in the act of oppression by the capitalists. It is because the dismissal of Benjamin happens when the Senator, who plays a main part in running the State, comes to interfere in the hospital's policy.

BENJAMIN: ...I do not mind being replaced, Doctor, but Leeds is a damn fool! He shouldn't be permitted-

BARNES: Leeds is the nephew of Senator Leeds.

BENJAMIN: He's incompetent as hell.

....

BARNES: Turn your gimlet eyes elsewhere, Doctor. Jigging around like a cricket on a hot grill won't help. Doctors do not run these hospitals. He's the Senator's nephew and there he stays (Odets, 1994: 1801).

The Class Struggle as the Impact of Oppression

The class struggle as the impact of oppression in the form of real action found in *Waiting for Lefty* comes to the surface after passing through a fundamental phase that eventually leads the workers to the class struggle, namely class consciousness. Thus,

the liberation of the class consciousness among the workers will be discussed before the class struggle is discussed.

Liberating the Class Consciousness

The important phase prior to the class struggle is the liberation of the class consciousness among the workers. This consciousness is needed as a tool to unite the workers into a distinct group, in this case a social class, so that it enhances the power of class struggle. According to Jozef Wilczynski, class consciousness is described as the awareness and understanding by members or groups of a particular layer of society belonging to a distinct social class (1981: 78). There are two stages of the development of class consciousness adopted in Marxism. As written by Jozef Wilczynski, class "in itself" and class "for itself" are Hegelian concepts adapted and used in classical Marxist terminology (especially by Marx and Engels) to describe two stages of the development of class consciousness among the working class. The former indicates the earlier stage, when workers become aware of their grievances against capitalists. If they take any action, it is directed against individual employers, not capitalists as a class. In the second stage, class "for itself", workers become conscious of their class identity (as the proletariat) and the unbridgeable antagonism that divides them from the class of capitalists (bourgeoisie) (1981: 79).

In *Waiting for Lefty*, to liberate the class consciousness among the workers, all the oppressed characters involved in the union speak up about their own experience of oppression. The oppressed characters have a particular experience of oppression done by the capitalists. Thus, they speak about the oppression in front of the members of the union to awake the class consciousness among them. Joe with his experience of oppression that threatens his family (Odets, 1994: 1789-1793), Sid with his experience of oppression that prevents him from getting married (Odets, 1994: 1796-1799), Miller and Benjamin with their experience of oppression that causes them to lose their jobs (Odets, 1994: 1793-1796 and 1801-1803), and Agate with his experience of oppression that causes the damage to his eyes and also

results in his poverty (Odets,1994: 1803-1804). They contribute to the process of awaking the class consciousness among the workers, the proletariat. The contribution of the individual's consciousness toward the experience of oppression above is considered as the "class in itself" stage. It takes place when each of the workers are aware of their condition. Their grievances are directed to their employers as individuals, not as a distinct class.

After they reach the "class in itself" stage, comes the "class for itself" stage. It takes place when the workers are fully conscious of their miserable condition that is caused by the mistreatment of their employers, the capitalists. In this stage, the workers act as a distinct social class that shares the same experience and feeling. The grievances are directed to the class of capitalists, not to the individual employers. In *Waiting for Lefty*, it seems that the workers have reached the "class for itself" stage. They are said to be in the stage of "class for itself" because they act as a distinct social class, the proletariat, they feel that they have the same opponents which are the capitalists. In this case, they act as a group of taxi drivers that is oppressed by the company, so they feel that they need to fight against the company that oppresses them. One character who particularly contributes to liberate the class consciousness among the workers is Agate. After being fed up because he finds that the life of the workers is miserable under the capitalists, he ferociously stimulates the union to strike. In fact, he is willing to be called as a Communist because of his desire to strike to get a better life.

AGATE (to audience): What's the answer, boys? The answer is, if we're reds because we wanna strike, then we take over their salute too! Know how they do it? (Makes Communist salute.) What is it? An uppercut! The good old uppercut to the chin! Hell, some of us boys ain't even got a shirt to our backs. What's the boss class tryin' to do-make a nudist colony outa us? (Odets, 1994: 1804).

In the end, the workers decide to strike. In this case, the strike can be described as the

realization of the class struggle. It happens because they get to the final stage of the class consciousness after they experienced oppression. Only the consciousness of the proletariat can point to the way that leads out of the dead end of capitalism. As long as this consciousness is lacking, the crisis remains permanent. When the proletariat is tired of the day by day slavery and oppression, the time has come for them to move out. The proletariat is not given any choice but to revolt against the greedy capitalists. As Marx says, quoted by Georg Lukacs, it must become a class not only "as against capital" but also "for itself"; that is to say, the class struggle must be raised from the level of economic necessity to the level of conscious aim and effective class consciousness (<http://www.marxists.org/archive/lukacs/works/history/lukacs3.htm>). "Class for itself" as the final stage of the class consciousness results in the class struggle.

Class Struggle

In their *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels write that the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles (1967:79). Marxism views the class struggle as an expression of dialectical materialism, where contradictions between classes lead to a struggle which is resolved in a synthesis, the process repeating itself as production forces change. The class owning the means of production utilizes the State, equipped with instruments of oppression, to maintain its rule over the exploited class. This rule and exploitation are opposed by the oppressed class in primarily two spheres:

1. Economic: A struggle for the improvement of the conditions of work and a change in the principle governing the distribution of the fruits of labour.
2. Political: A struggle for the seizure and maintenance of political power (Wilczynski ,1981:80).

In the capitalist society, the main characters of class struggle are the capitalists on one side and the proletariat on the other side. Put crudely, the capitalists desire high profits and the proletariat want high wages.

This is the source of the struggle between the classes.

The State also plays a significant role in the act of class struggle done by the proletariat. It is because the State has become a tool for the capitalists as the oppressor to oppress and exploit the proletariat. It also can be found in *Waiting for Lefty*, particularly in the Lab Assistant Episode scene when Miller is asked to do an illegal job. The job is to spy and to make a poison gas. Ironically, it is ordered by the State, using war as the main justification.

FAYETTE: The world is an armed camp today. One match sets the whole world blazing in forty eight hours. Uncle Sam won't be caught napping!

Miller (addressing his pencil): They say 12 million were killed in that last one and 20 million more wounded or missing.

FAYETTE: That's not our worry. If big business went sentimental over human life there wouldn't be big business of any sort! (Odets, 1994: 1794).

After experiencing the oppression and the final stage of class consciousness, the "class for itself", the proletariat in *Waiting for Lefty* decides to strike. The strike is the real action of the class struggle to demand a better life. In the domain of Marxism, a strike within a company done by the workers in order to demand a better life can be included in the category of class struggle. However, a strike is not identical to a class struggle. The strike is just the means of the class struggle. There are two basics of class struggle. They are economic and political.

The economic motive is merely the fundamental one because the proletariat wants a better economic life. It happens because the capitalists, the ones who has power over the proletariat, can do anything to the proletariat, including deliberately oppressing.

JOE:..."God," the wife says," eighty cents ain't money-don't buy beans almost. You're workin' for the company," she says to me, "Joe! You ain;t workin' for me or the family no more!"...(Odets, 1994: 1789).

The class struggle is the response to the oppression. The oppressed characters generally experience economic problems. For example Joe who cannot fulfill the needs of the family, and also Sid who cannot get married because he does not have enough money. They are trapped in that kind of situation because they belong to the distinct social class that is oppressed by another class. Hence, they have to do the struggle to liberate themselves from their unhealthy economic life. In other words, the economic oppression has an impact which is the class struggle.

JOE: ...What's this crap about goin' home to hot suppers? I'm asking to your faces how many's got hot suppers to go home to? Anyone who's sure of his next meal, raise your hand! A certain gent sitting behind me can raise them both. But not in front here! And that's why we're talking strike-to get a living wage! (Odets, 1994: 1789).

The political struggle is conducted because they want to make sure that they can have a stable economic condition. The struggle will have an impact on the life of the proletariat. The desire to completely liberate the class because of the oppression is very strong since they experience extreme oppression in their lives.

AGATE (crying): Hear it boys, hear it? Hell, listen to me! Coast to coast! HELLO AMERICA! HELLO. WE'RE STORMBIRDS OF THE WORKING CLASS. WORKERS OF THE WORLD... OUR BONES AND BLOOD! And when we die they'll know what we did to make a new world! Christ, cut us up to little pieces. We'll die for what is right! Put fruit trees where our ashes are! (To audience): Well, what's the answer?

ALL: STRIKE!

AGATE: LOUDER!

ALL: STRIKE!

Agate and OTHERS on Stage: AGAIN!

All: STRIKE, STRIKE, STRIKE!!! (Odets, 1994: 1805).

Led by Agate, after knowing that Lefty has been killed, they conduct the strike to

demand their rights. Agate says that they want to make a new world. It means that they want to make a better world for themselves. The new world means a world without oppression. Thus, the strike as the means of the class struggle results in a political struggle. It is the struggle to seize the power of the capitalists so that they can form their own world.

Conclusion

From the analysis, it is obvious that the society consists of two different classes which are the capitalists who own the means of production; therefore they have power, and the proletariat who sell their labor. The antagonistic relationship between capitalists and proletariat exists in the society according to the Marxism theory. Capitalists as the one that have the power over the proletariat tend to oppress the proletariat in order to maintain their position as the upper class while the proletariat want some improvement in their life. Their different interests cause them to always be in dispute.

The day by day oppressions done by the capitalists that are ironically assisted by the State in the form of economic and legal oppression eventually make the proletariat conscious of their miserable condition. They are conscious that they, as one class, are oppressed by another class. This consciousness is known as class consciousness, to be more specific, it is the “class for itself” stage of the class consciousness. This leads the proletariat to struggle in order to improve their life since the capitalists cannot provide it for them. It is called the class struggle. Hence, it appears that the oppression carried out by the capitalists result in the form of class struggle conducted by the class that experiences the oppression in order to bring back the welfare that is lost in the capitalist society.

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