

CLASS STRUGGLE AS THE IMPACT OF OPPRESSION SEEN IN CLIFFORD ODETS' WAITING FOR LEFTY

Abstract

Class struggle is one of 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. They conduct the class struggle because they want welfare in their life. Waiting for Lefty, a play written by Clifford Odets that is often considered as a masterpiece, has a related theme to class struggle. It talks so much about the gap that separates the two classes mentioned previously and also the oppression that comes along. The oppressions found in the form of economic and legal oppression are responded by the oppressed class in the form of class struggle. The class struggle itself is finally conducted after the oppressed class experience the class consciousness. The oppressions 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

Introduction

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

Through *Waiting for Lefty*, Clifford Odets tries to represent this phenomenon. Odets tries to give a critical opinion toward the condition of society and economical life related to human rights by writing *Waiting for Lefty*. He stands behind an oppressed class that resists humanism in life, in this case, the oppressed class is represented by the group of taxi drivers. Odets fights against the oppression that is experienced by the labor especially in economical aspect caused by the arbitrariness of the employer and even despotism done by the government. The writer chooses *Waiting for Lefty* as the literary work to be studied because some characters that are represented by the members of workers union, in this case taxi drivers union and their relations, represent the struggle of an oppressed class against the ruling class that is represented by the other characters which are 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 fields of disciplines, for example economics, politics, cultural studies, etc. The play allows the writer to understand the humanistic value about welfare for people. The conflict faced by the taxi drivers is massively related to their economic life. In *Waiting for Lefty*, Odets describes the taxi drivers' problem in 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 the 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 get the equality of welfare among the people. The people should get the rights they have to deserve. Through

the point of equality of welfare that is demanded and struggled by the working class in the play, the writer feels the issues are very worthy to study. The classification in the society will be the first thing to analyze in this study. The oppressions done by the oppressor class is following behind it. 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: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat (1975: 115). In their *Communist Manifesto*, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels explain that bourgeois is the synonym of capitalist because both are the owners of the means of social production and 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 depending to 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 of the job as a taxi driver is not sufficient for the life of his family. When the union where he is involved is in the middle of dispute, he is the one who is brave enough to incinerate the others to do a 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 misery after being complained 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 about how 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 namely Fayette before he works 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 last experience which exclusively concerns about the arbitrariness of the employer. He reveals his bad experience when he is fired from his job, regardless his ability and talent, because he does not want to do a spying job.

Fayette : You understand the consequences?
 Miller : I lose my raise-
 Miller : And my job!
Simultaneously 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 the people cannot live properly if they have no 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 fix things right. Thus, Sid can be described as man who easily gives up. 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 who used to be a Doctor before joined the taxi company as a driver. Similar to Miller, he also reveals the unfair treatment by his employer in his previous job. 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 Senator's nephew. In other words, the employer has a complete control over him, in spite of everything.

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 do a strike after they wait Lefty- the union leader- for a long time, but they cannot see him. He is proud to be a member of working class. He is a hard worker. When he was eleven, his eyes got injured because the factory where he worked doesn't provide shield to protect the labor from injury. As a result, he uses 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 shrill of 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 Capitalists

The capitalists are the opponent of the proletariat. They can fully control the employers 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 is the representation of the taxi company. He is described as a wealthy person. He extremely insists to refuse the decision to conduct the strike. It is because Fatt already got a better life as a result of his corrupt leadership. Rather than supporting the union to do a strike to get a better life, he tries to prevent it. In fact, he provides some strikes that met a dead end to stir up the union to not to do the 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 ferrin' 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" that refers to the communist to everyone who wants to do the strike in order to mock them. At that moment, communism is considered as 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 ordered in order to serve the country but clearly the case of business is the one that 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 just 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 Oppressions

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/polsci/marx/gayleft/towardstheory.rtf). 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 but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones (Marx & Engels, 1967: 80). By modern bourgeois society, it means the capitalism society since by bourgeois is meant the class of modern capitalists, owners of the means of social production and 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 actor of it 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 factor plays a great role in running the social life.

We have Joe as an example. Wage from the job as a taxi driver cannot fully feed the family. Although he has been working so hard to feed the family, but it meets a dead end. It is because the company where he works has no certain attention about the wage, regardless the economic condition of the employee. 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 worth it concerning the fact that Joe has driven all day long. It seems that the company disobeys the welfare of the drivers. As the family economic keeps worsening, the problems within the family keep increasing. In fact, Edna threatens Joe if their economic life is not getting better, she will leave Joe for another man namely 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 called the rickets. He's making a jelly-fish out of 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 for their inability to get married, economic factor also plays a great role. They have a quite similar experience as Joe and Edna. The low wage given by the company to Sid makes him unable to build his own family, his own life. Their engagement is not supported by Flor's brother, Irv and also her mother. Irv mentions that the wage of a taxi driver cannot be used 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 wanta 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 reach the high profit. It can be a tool to maintain their position as 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 also gets oppressed by the taxi company. He feels that his work is merely to give the welfare to the company instead of himself. He thinks that his life is robbed by the boss. Agate thinks that the poverty that is in the corner of his life 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 giving 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, 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 State objectives are transformed into objectives of the department, and department objectives into objectives of the state (1978: 24). By saying department, it 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 the result, the taxes can be increased.

The oppression is called as legal oppression because the State as the legal institution participates in act of oppression. The State cooperates with the capitalists oppress the proletariat. As the highest institution, 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 country or the State apparently legalizes the 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 can 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 to will give him the label of 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 a patient is ridiculously replaced by the board of hospital's director. In the end, Benjamin eventually gets fired. Although the person's ability is far from Benjamin's competence, Benjamin is powerless because the person is the nephew of the Senator that 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 Senator, as the main part involved 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. Jiggling 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 *Waiting for Lefty* comes to the surface after passing through a fundamental phase that eventually lead the workers to the class struggle, namely class consciousness. Thus, the writer will discuss the liberation of the class consciousness among the workers firstly before starting to discuss the class struggle.

Liberating the Class Consciousness

The important phase prior to the class struggle is the liberation of the class consciousness among the workers. The consciousness is needed as a tool to unite the workers in 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 their own experience of oppression. The oppressed characters have a particular experience of oppression done by the capitalists. Thus, they speak up the deeds 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 to get married (Odets, 1994: 1796-1799), Miller and Benjamin with their experience of oppression that causes the discharge comes to them (Odets, 1994: 1793-1796 and 1801-1803), and Agate with his experience of oppression that causes the damage in his eyes and also the poverty he gets (Odets, 1994: 1803-1804). They contribute to the process of awaking the class consciousness among the workers, the proletariat. The contribution of 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. The acts of grievances they conduct are directed to their employers as individual, not 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 arbitrariness 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 one. 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, 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 do the strike. In fact, he is willing to be called as a Communist regarding his desire to do the 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 do the strike. In this case, the strike can be described as the realization of the class struggle. It happens because they get the final stage of the class consciousness after they experienced the 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 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 leads the workers to do 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 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 by using war as the main reason to cover the business enterprise.

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 do the strike. The strike is the real action of the class struggle to demand the 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. Those 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 as the one who has power over the proletariat can do anything to the proletariat, including deliberately oppresses them.

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).

Thus, the oppression is followed by the class struggle as the response. The oppressed characters generally have a bad condition of economic life. For example Joe who cannot fulfill the needs of the family, and also Sid who cannot

get married because he does not have 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 condition of life, regarding their economic life. The struggle will give an impact to the life of the proletariat if they can maintain the condition struggled. The desire to completely liberate the class for the oppression is very strong since they experience the extreme oppression in their life.

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 right. Agate says that they want to make a new world. It means that they want to make a better world for them. The new world means the

world without oppression. Thus, the strike as the means of the class struggle results in 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 do not own. The antagonistic relationship between capitalists and proletariat exists in the society concerning the Marxism theory. Anyhow, capitalists as the one that have 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 interest makes them always 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. The consciousness is known as class consciousness, to be more specific, it is the “class for itself” stage of the class consciousness. This lead the proletariat to conduct a struggle to get the improvement of their life since the capitalists cannot provide it for them. It is called as the class struggle. Hence, it appears that the oppression done by the capitalists is resulting 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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