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Karl Marx

Word count: 1,089 words

Long list of social systems used in our world can be traced throughout the history of mankind. Since the earliest of time, humankind has developed its social structures immensely, from agricultural communities to the industrialized ones, from feudalism to capitalism. One key reason of all the revolutionary efforts put forth to change the social system is inequality. However, after centuries, for the most part of the world, of capitalism implementation, this persistent problem of inequality is still ubiquitous. Is capitalism failing? What is to happen next if it does fail? And how can the world handle it? Marxism is a possible solution. Marxist socialism is a sustainable form of governance that can help lessen inequality in the world; it gives everyone equal access to means of production; it abolishes class struggle and exploitation; and it gives equal opportunity of advancement.

Tracing back to the feudalism of the middle age, where most population of Europe lived under serfdom, the idea of inequality and social injustice were vividly perceptible. Afterward, capitalism emerged as a form of governance with high potential of mending the unjust societies. A capitalist society is a market society in which its population produces commodities in the hope that someone would buy them. The prices of the products, including the ability to work, are determined by the forces of demand and supply. In this type of society, only the minority of the population owns the means of production, leaving the majority with only their labor to sell for survival. The word that Marx used to represent the majority is proletariat. Proletariat is a class in capitalist society in which its people do not own any property

and their only mean of survival is by selling their labors in return of money,¹ while the minority was called the bourgeoisie, the class of modern capitalist.² Capitalism brought with it the classification of people into two classes. The bourgeoisie, owning all the means of production, have more economic and political power. For example, they can keep the supply of employment low, whenever possible, to pressure the unemployed workers to take the undesirable jobs and to indirectly force the currently employed to hold onto their jobs even if it is lowly paid or has disagreeable working conditions.³ This evidently causes social inequality in the capitalist society. In present time, Thailand, as one of the capitalist countries, has an extensive income gap between the rich and the poor. The richest 20 percent of the population has the income share of 60 percent whereas the income of poorest 20 percent is only 4 percent.⁴ In capitalist societies, inequality is still one of the most critical social problems.

Marx's political theory, socialism, gives everyone equal access to means of production. It mainly focuses on the common ownership of land, capital, labor and other means of production. Marx and Engels both believed that socialism would bring about a sense of public ownership among the population.⁵ When all means of production are made public, everyone can have equal access to them. This would eventually lead to commensurate distribution of wealth. The proletariat would have the opportunity to leap out of poverty and exploitation. People can contribute to the society according to their personal abilities, and, in return, will be awarded the same amount of their contributions. This is the complete opposition of the distribution in

¹ "Proletariat." Dictionary.com. 29 Aug. 2012. <<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/proletariat>>

² Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels. *The communist manifesto*. 1999. p65-76.

³ Tucker, Robert C. *The Marxian Revolutionary Idea*. 1970. p 42-46

⁴ Parista Yuthamanop. "TDRI: Income gap to widen without change, Lower middle-class fails to catch up." Bangkokpost. 2 Sept. 2012. <<http://www.bangkokpost.com/learning/learning-from-news/270964/income-inequality-in-thailand>>

⁵ "What is Marxism?" All about philosophy. 5 Sept. 2012. <<http://www.allaboutphilosophy.org/what-is-marxism-faq.htm>>

means of production and wealth in the capitalist society in which the capitalists have total control of every means of production. This irregular wealth distribution causes social inequality in present day societies. Therefore, common ownership is a factor that can help promote social equality because everyone can have equal access to means of production which would ultimately leads to appropriate distribution of wealth.

Marxian socialism, when implemented, would lead to the classless society which can help alleviate class struggle and exploitation. Classless society means a state of social structure without any ruling body when the final goal of true communist society is attained.⁶ In present capitalist society, the capitalists clearly have the upper hands in terms of economic and political power. They can exercise their power to gain more wealth through different channels, including the exploitation of the working class, which leads to the widening gaps between economic classes. The interesting contemporary example of workers exploitation is Apple Inc. Apple, now the most valuable company in history,⁷ faced the accusation of violating Chinese law on overtime payment for workers. There were reports about the excessive working hours forced onto the workers who had to unwillingly add the overtime work hour of 80 to 100 per month in additional to their exorbitant regular 174 work hours.⁸ Apple exploited their factory workers with excessive workloads that break Chinese law and also its own code of conduct. Due to china fast growing economy, many of its population were left in poverty. The labors are indirectly forced to work under this

⁶ Jain, Parul. "Classless society(Marxism)." Encyclopedia Britannica. 4 Sept. 2012. <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/120386/classless-society>>

⁷ Schaefer, Steve and others. "Apple is now the most valuable company in history." Forbes. 7 Sept. 2012. <<http://www.forbes.com/sites/benzingainsights/2012/08/21/apple-now-most-valuable-company-in-history/>>

⁸ Zielenziger, David. "Latest iPad: Apple Still Exploiting Chinese Workers, Activists Say." International Business Times. 9 Sept. 2012. <<http://www.ibtimes.com/articles/311137/20120308/apple-ipad-foxconn-slave-labor-contract-sumofus.htm>>

excruciating work condition⁹ because of their financial circumstances. In the classless society, there would be no exploitation of workers because everyone will have equal rights to the means of production. There would be no more capitalists who can take advantage of the working class to accrue wealth for themselves. Hence, in classless society, the issue of class struggle and exploitation will diminish, leading the society to social justice and equality.

In the capitalist society, where wealth is distributed unevenly, people have unequal access to education. The capitalists can provide good education for themselves and their offspring. With better education, they can develop themselves in numerous ways which would subsequently help them accumulate more wealth. But their advancements are at the expense of the poor who have less access to education. This creates inequality among the classes of the capitalist society. Socialism goal, on the other hand, is not for each individual to separately develop oneself but to develop the society in unison.¹⁰ In socialist society, everyone will have equal right to development regardless of their birth, social statuses or other circumstances.

Inequality is the social problem that has persevered for millenniums. There were many revolutionary efforts in the history. Those attempts, successful in solving other social problems, still could not abolish social inequality. Marxism is a social structure with a very just stance. It can be used to explain the flaws of capitalism and provides solution to inequality by allocating means of production equally, abolishing class struggle and exploitation, and offering equal opportunity of advancement. In conclusion, Marxist socialism is a feasible way that can fight inequality in the capitalist society of the modern world.

⁹ Sarno, David. "Worker from Foxconn, Apple's Chinese factory, jumps to death." LA Times. 11 Sept. 2012. <<http://articles.latimes.com/2012/jun/14/business/la-fi-tn-foxconn-worker-20120614>>

¹⁰ Schmitt, Richard. *Introduction to Marx and Engels*. 1997. p 205-206.