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On Strong, Resolute Labor Union Leaders

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Abstract

Unions were initially created as economic supports for workers. Along the course of time, they developed with difficulties and acquired social and invariably political dimensions. Unions' emergence in Turkey was late, while their improvement was painful. All over the world, as unions grew bigger, union activities got more professional along with acquirement of new technical possibilities, on one hand; and considerable losses in the early enthusiasm also occurred, on the other hand. Business owners sometimes associated unions with radical opposing political currents in their inappropriate fear. But the mentioned currents did try to penetrate into those establishments, where economical considerations with a view to welfare were supposed to have been the overweighing Issues. Even though at times, some union leaders themselves essentially neglected the workers while solely focusing on an increase of their own might, through false unions; their wrongdoing should not be loaded on to honest union activities. In this article, also a novel by Robbins which is very related to the topic, is made much use of.

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1. Introduction

Social policy is understood as the entirety of the state measures aiming to improve the situation of population layers weak in material gains.

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On top of all masses weak in economic conditions () and thus worthy of protection takes place the working class. Those are the people who gain their subsistence solely by laboring and are therefore covered within the scope of the work law for their protection (Boyacigil, 1968: 4-5).*

Whenever the rights of workers come into question; a word which comes to minds and is not to be imagined apart from the workers is indeed the “union” as an institutionalized structure.

Unionism represents an institution preserving its existence almost in all countries from socialist ones to developing ones and from authoritative political regimes to pluralist democracies (Ekin, 1989: 72).

In Turkey; due to the weakness of the industry as well as legal and political intolerance; unionism is a rather delayed activity with respect to developed countries.

It is interesting to note that the working class was not to be “spoiled” even after the Second Constitutional Monarchy: *Liberal clauses dated 1909 were in question; but; the eight item of the Law of Tasks and Occupations dated July 7, 1325 [1909] was almost totally knocking down the unions by stating that it is forbidden to establish a union in any organization carrying out public services (Sulker 1998: 64, with reference to Velidedeoglu & Ataay). This same mentality had been present in 1850 when in Police Regulations the abolishment and prevention of labor teams and categories had been inserted (Sulker, 1998: 64).*

As Boyacigil (1968: 83) notes it *during the aftermath of the Second World War; the change in political and economic conditions led to the setting up of unions and the guarantees in 1961 Constitution enabled their revival.*

2. Contributing Material from an American Fiction Work

It is possible to incur that in many countries furthering unions was not easy at all. In one of his novels, Harold Robbins tells the story of a young man originating from the mountainous West Virginia, starting his career in coal mines and ending up as a prominent union leader.

In Pennsylvania in Pittsburgh, the heart of the steel industry, in September 1919 the first unions are at the stage of burgeoning and a big prospective strike irritates the atmosphere of the city.

Strike posts are in front of the plant, forming a human chain by holding hands (*) and the opposing forces come against them all together. The latter consist of the mounted police, the national guards (which mean the American version of gendarmerie) and the paid henchmen of the Pinkerton Bureau, a private detective office present since 1950. A lot of blood is shed. The wives and children are not spared from the blows either.

The hero of the novel, Daniel, had found a guard job just after his military service in World War One. The chief of the guards is a retired non-commissioned-officer. When Daniel had questioned the prospective use against the strikers, the chief had fired him immediately and moreover had had him beaten up. From that moment onwards, Daniel had taken refuge among the unionists (highlighted from Robbins, 1979: 278-284).

Daniel had formerly started his work life as a miner and got promoted to a clerical task. His sister at the textile plant, Molly Ann, and her husband Jimmy got killed with the bullets of the men of Mr. Fitch, the big shot and practically the owner of the town Fitchville. The issue was to soften and bring into line the recalcitrant workers of the textile plant in town. When father Jebb wet down town and revenged himself on the deputy sheriff, Mr. Fitch retaliated by busting the mountain house and exterminating the whole family.

Daniel in turn killed Mr. Fitch and headed for the reformatory house, from where he got sent to Europe as a new recruit. At the time his consideration of the events had been thoroughly on personal grounds. Roscoe, carrier of the bad news about the daughter and the son-in-law, was fighting his own separate war. They had confiscated his land

* Though utterly simplified; a very didactic example would consist of comparing the worker with the peasant, another weak element of the society. The striking difference is that the latter, in his community (*Gemeinschaft*) will at least survive in the literal sense; while the former in his urban society (*Gesellschaft*) is devoid of such a guarantee. s.c.

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