Stephen Giang

Prof Kallas

Political Science 102

21 October, 2018

Reader Response 9

Common grievances that the working class faced during and after the civil war were unfair wages and crazy work conditions. The working class consisted mostly of factory or miner jobs. They would be doing routine work in a dangerous, overheated factory on hours a day, or work in the mines with the dangerous toxins. Many of these workers died either from heat stroke, lung cancer, or a collapse of a mining tunnel. These workers worked twelve hours a day, for every day of the week, with barely enough money to feed themselves or their families. They took all the risk, and received little of the reward. All of this was happening while the rich were profiting off of them, and not ever putting in any of the work. They simply invested a little money to get the poorer class to make them even more money than they were paying. This is the basis of Capitalism, a use of money to make even more money. Most textbooks forget to say that a consequence to Capitalism is that it is usually at the expense of others that one is able to profit off of. These unfair wages, terrible working conditions, and the huge gaps between worker and boss still live on today. This creates little opportunity for any increase in living in America. It’s hard for one to work their way up the ladder of success when all the jobs are keeping you at arms distance from where you want to be.

Nowadays, it isn’t the working conditions that people are angry over, because working conditions have actually improved drastically since then. What hasn’t changed is the aspect of unfair wages, and a huge wage gap. What has changed is an even bigger wage gap between the richer and poorer class. During today’s time, the working class does a great job in expanding the wealth of the higher classes. They exponentially grow their bosses and employers income while they don’t receive any great portion of it. This is why the top one percent controls over 40 percent of the nation’s entire income.

During the civil war, there were strikes that arose from the animosity of the war between the rich and the poor. I believe these strikes were very much justified. The working class risked their lives in the pursuit to survive, all while the rich were profiting off their lives. So to ask if these strikes were justified, I believe so because if the rich were to profit off the lives of the poorer, they should take in the consequences of that. You can’t profit of other’s lives without the risk that they’ll gladly take your life when demands meets goods.

The government tried hard to improve workers conditions to calm down workers’ strike movements. They chose this option because it was a lot easier to do this rather than increase their wages to a fairer amount. They settled down the movements while still keeping the wage gap as distanced as they wanted it to be.

In 1857, there was a worldwide economic panic. This was the panic of 1857. Due to over speculation in railroads and lands, false banking practices, and a break in the flow of European capital to American investments as a result of the Crimean War, the United States was headed towards one of the biggest economic declines. Because the many powerful economies were connected, when the United States started their decline, so did the other countries’. This huge decline became the first worldwide economic crisis.

Big businesses tried to find so many ways to achieve economic stability during the Civil War. Big businesses monopolized on the Civil War with their research toward war weapons, technology, and ways for one to side to win the war. They also used the pending war status as a way to use or not use the slaves in their own personal affairs. As well, with the economic crisis of 1857, they were also able to lower the wages of their employees and keep more of the profit made by them.

These big businesses were actually very successful in their pursuit towards economic stability. They used the war to their advantage and sold weapons to keep their own profits maximized.

With the huge decline in the United States’ economy, the rich and the poor both began to see their income decrease. While the rich’s wealth was decreasing, they would also lower the wages to their workers and everyone started to decrease in wealth. Also with the decrease in economy, the rich were also being stingier with their money and the rate at which they paid their employees also decreased.

The economic crisis contributed to the outbreak of the civil war because the civil war was a war based on the keeping of slavery or the abolishment of it. Many of the rich knew that without the use of slaves, the economy would decline because most of production and work were being done by the African slaves. During the civil war, many of the slave production were being stopped due to the debate on whether or not to keep the slave laws. This led the economy to a decline.

The civil war was one of the first instances in the world of modern welfare. In the civil war, there were “deadly artillery shells, Gatling guns, bayonet charges-combining the indiscriminate killing of mechanized war with hand- to-hand combat.” This is the first war with automated weapons and extensive research towards weapons and chemicals to be used specifically in war. Many wars previously were settled through hand to hand combat and simple guns with gun powder. Nowadays, wars are based off of chemical warfare, nuclear bombs, and advanced automatic guns.

What became a huge priority and a huge asset in the United States was war weapons. The higher class rich people used their money to research chemicals and technological advances to sell towards high government officials. War became one of the greatest consumers in the United States and many of higher class citizens monopolized on that fact and invested their money towards war weapons. This is how capitalists used their money to find a great way to exponentially increase their revenue.

The law can seem very neutral and much sided in many parts throughout American history. Throughout this history we have seen a lot of evidence that uncovers the question of “Is the law neutral or side?”

In the constitution, on paper, the law is very neutral and is shown to be the fairest form of rule to protect all citizens from a tyranny of power. The law says that everyone can vote, everyone has the right to protest, and everyone can express their religions freely. The law is used when these rights are violated. They are used to protect the citizens from authorities abusing their power and to ensure all forms of fairness.

However, the law that is being executed is much sided. In the strikes, during the Economic Panic of 1857, many of these protestors were being put in jail for their disobedience and normal protests. They were taken away for protesting for better work conditions and better wages. In addition to these unfair standards, people were being taken away due to their color and class. The poorer classes or the darker races were being put into custody more often than the white higher class citizens. In fact, it was hardly ever recorded that rich people ever went to jail that often. The police, the symbols of the law, abuse their power and seem to stereotype the poorer classes as more criminal despite the rich doing the same things. The law is sided towards whoever has the more money. The more money, the more control of the country they get, meaning they can avoid jail time because they control the United States.

When we take a look at the statistics of the different concentrations of people during this time, we see that the jail consisted mostly of the working class, and the strikers that are within that class. The rich were seen as the victims because they didn’t pose as a physical threat. The strikers on the other hand did use physical violence to show their oppression towards the big business corporate heads. These different ways at going at one another were very different approaches. One was hurting the other economically and other was hurting the other with violence. The police only saw the strikes as the only violence one was giving. What they didn’t see however was the low wages, poor conditions, and huge wage gap that were the major issue of the entire strikes. The higher officials were silently hurting the lower class, while the lower class attempted to do it in a more attention grabbing way. This was a true battle of lower and higher class, the working class and the profit class.

In my honest opinion, the law is not fair. The high and rich class gets away with anything they want. They’re able to bend the law and make legislation fit their own wants and needs without the thought of the lower class. They use the working class to harvest even more money for themselves, opening the extensive wage gap even more than ever. During the time of the civil war there were no laws or legislation that defended the working class. The upper class literally could do whatever they wanted with the working class. Even in today’s time, despite the many working condition laws, there is still the true concept of capitalism at stake here. The poor make the money, while the rich profit the money, two very different things. The law definitely takes sides, and takes the side of the rich more often than not. The working class has been treated unfairly in so many cases. They don’t get fair enough wages, get terrible working conditions, and only keep a small percentage of the money they produce for their employer. When they decide to strike and fight for their own personal rights, nothing is changed except more of the lower class is being thrown into jail.

An oligarchy is “a small group of people having control of a country, organization, or institution. Helper said that the South is a “slave-driving oligarchy.” What this means is that the entire southern portion of the United States’ economy is driven by slave work. They depended on the slaves’ labor for all of their farming and production needs. The south was the right temperature and climate for certain crops to grow. The south utilized these crops, and needed the extra labor work, so they almost industrialized slaves and used them for all of their production needs. The role that this dependency of slaves had on the civil war is everything. The civil war was a war to keep or abolish slavery, and the huge dependency on the slaves made the south disagree on the discontinuation of slave labor. This oligarchy is the dependency of slave labor. The use of slave labor drove the southern economy and was its foundation and backbone. To get rid of slaves would be a very harmful strike to the economy and the rich slave owners. This played a huge role in the class conflict as well as the rich did not want to give up their free labor, while the lower class wanted more jobs. There was a shortage on jobs because of the slave labor, so the lower class wanted it to be abolished. The upper class wanted to keep the free labor, as it was a way to maximize their profits.

The flour riot of 1837 was a riot in New York that resulted in over five hundred barrels of flour and a thousand bushels of wheat either stolen or destroyed. The working class at this time was not making high enough wages to afford the inflated food prices of the time. During the late 1836s, commodities prices skyrocketed, as the Panic of 1837 was slowly coming. Such incidents like this happened mostly in large cities because the inflation rate was higher than in smaller cities. Also, in smaller cities, there were less people who would come together to riot and make such a huge dilemma. Incidents happened, but not as much as in larger cities, where the prices were too high and as well as more people to join, motivating acts such as riots or strikes.

During the Civil War, men on both sides of the conflict were able to buy their way out the draft. The implications of this are relying on the aspect that you can either help financially or physically. This was a huge contribution to the conflicts of the classes. Many of the lower class did not have the luxury to buy out of the war, so they were forced to risk their lives out on the battlefield. They also understood that most of the upper class’ income came from their work, and were angry that despite them putting the work in, they were the ones who had to go out to war. They worked hard for their money and yet they’re lives still are valued less than that of the upper rich class. This was the reasoning that fueled class conflicts.

The “growing costs of war” meant that ordinary people had to be drafted into a war that they did not care for. As well, they had to give up their jobs and livelihood to fight this war. They had to go under terrible conditions, put their life out on the line for the war, and give up the life they had back before the war. These demands were the growing costs of the war. They needed more men or more money. They took more money from the people who could afford it, and took lives of men who couldn’t.

If this were to happen in the present time, I would be strongly against this, and I would put all my energy towards a resistance. I wouldn’t do it violently, because violence is what I am trying to avoid, but I would do it politically using the law, despite it being bias, to defend my opinion on drafting ordinary people out to war.

I support Howard Zinn’s primary contention in chapters that the class conflict that had been brewing in the United States since its inception, from the pre- and post-Revolutionary era, did not disappear during the Civil War. When the English colonists originally sailed to America, they came with the pursuit of opportunity. When any foreigners come to America, they come with the pursuit of the ‘American Dream,’ the land of opportunity. When they do arrive here, they begin to realize that this capitalistic society is actually a very big inhibitor to being successful. Since the Revolutionary era, there was always an issue of the rich using the poor to their own whims, and using their lives to make a profit. The reason why this has been a problem is because of what society was based on. For many years, even before the Revolution, capitalism ran many countries. The definition of a capitalist is someone who uses money to invest in trade and industry for profit in accordance with the principles of capitalism. The biggest flaw in Capitalism is that there will always be a small upper class with the majority of the wealth, with a bigger working or lower class that doesn’t receive enough. Despite models saying that a big middle class would make a great capitalistic society, it just isn’t possible, according to every nation with capitalism so far in history. The way capitalism is made, the rich will always profit off the poorer class’ work. The rich hire the poor to do their work and make money for them, in exchange for a small portion of that money. So by paying the poor for their jobs, the rich are actually gaining more money than they’re spending for their workers. The poor do their jobs and make a substantial amount of money for their employers, while being paid less than they made for their employer. For the rich, there is a net gain in money, while the poor receive a net loss in money. This is why the rich will get richer, as the poor get poorer. That’s the reason as to why class conflict has continued even after the civil war.

Many historians call the Civil War the rich man’s battle but the poor man’s fight. The definition of a battle is a general conflict between two sides. While a fight is defined as taking part in a violent struggle involving the exchange of physical blows or the use of weapons. During the Civil War, there was a conflict of politics between the northern capitalists and the southern capitalists. The northern capitalists wanted to remove slavery because it wasn’t needed for them to make their money, while the southern capitalists wanted to keep slavery because they were the main drivers of their income and a way to maximize their profits. This was the battle between the rich during the Civil War. The poor had to go to war and fight physically. They had to risk their lives, use weapons of mass destructions against fellow Americans, and leave behind their family and entire livelihoods. All of this was an economic argument settled through physical violence and the lives of many Americans. This economic debate resulted in the deaths of 620 thousand lives of poor men and soldiers. The battle between the two economies, the money that the south was so afraid of losing, was worth 620 thousand lives according to the capitalists during this era. The rich never went to war, as they paid their way out, and used the lives of so many people to defend their prospects. This is why the lower class had strikes and riots against the upper class.

I whole heartedly support the statement that the Civil War was the rich man’s battle, but the poor man’s fight. The rich used the poor, like all capitalists do. They use the poor to make for their own personal gain. The rich use the poor in society and were gladly open to using them in war. This war was an economic debate that was fought by regular ordinary people, and showed no net gain of money for anyone in the end anyways.