

How The Power Elite Encourage Commodity Fetishism

A group of people especially in the US are called the “power elite” and they have the money and resources needed to ultimately control the US. G. William Domhoff wrote *The Class Domination Of Power* and he describes the “power elite” as the CEO’s, board members, and the corporate community. Although the US is founded on the principles of freedom and rights to the people, commodity fetishism produces this idea that although we think we are choosing, we are really being controlled. Commodity fetishism described by Karl Marx is when relations between things determine relations between humans. The “power elite” contributes to commodity fetishism within our country and fails to allow consumers to associate the labor put into making products being sold into our country.

You may think that the presidents and policy makers of the US are motivated by their own opinions or even opinions of the people, but this is a false reality. Members of the “power elite” directly involve themselves in the federal government ensuring they have access to the White House, Congress, and specific agencies, departments or committees in the executive branch. The “power elite” are more commonly referred to as corporate lobbyists, backroom super-lawyers, and industry wide trade associations. Jeffrey Epstein is someone we can recognize as a part of this group. Epstein was a millionaire who associated himself with celebrities, politicians, billionaires and academic stars. Epstein was in the banking and financial sector eventually starting his own firm. He was able to cultivate an “elite” circle, which included Donald Trump, a former president. Someone like him was able to get close to political figures and probably even influence them in decision making. You can also note that several of these “power elite” members worked alongside “think tanks”. “Think tanks” are policy makers or institutions that research public policy and political strategy. This is another way the “power elite” can influence politics in several forms such as, information, gifts, insider dealing, friendship, or private jobs.

The concept of commodity fetishism is that we as consumers can’t recognize the labor, usually exploitation, that occurred to make the things we consume. “People in capitalist societies begin to treat

expended to produce the object”, states Marx. The experience of consuming products obscures what went in to create that product. We as a society have the desire for material objects and having the money to buy these things connects that with a “good” feeling when we purchase them. We fail to see what might have gone into creating this thing and therefore continuing exploitation of these low paid workers. “Although value ultimately accrues because of human labor, people in a capitalist system are led to believe that they are not in control of the market forces that appear to exist independently of any individual person”, says Marx. Essentially saying that that's just the way it is and people in capitalist societies don't think that they can control how these products are made.

The real issue is that most of the citizens here don't have enough power to change commodity fetishism. Even if people started to think about who is making what they buy, the ability to ultimately change it is difficult. The working class in the US have so little power. Starting at the turn of the 19th century, the working class was divided, and they were forced to choose between Democratic or Republican parties. To this day Democratic and Republican parties remain dominant and typically parties like Reform, Libertarian, Socialist, Natural Law, Constitution, and Green Parties, don't stand a chance. The development of trade unions never allowed the working class to create their own party early on. With the history of internal division, political frustration, and union defeat, Americans continue to accept highly individualistic ideology. With little power in the working class comes economic inequality and the continuation of commodity fetishism. We will continue to let ourselves value high-priced items rather than value things we need to survive. Capitalism drives commodity fetishism and there may be no real way to avoid it in a capitalist society. Capitalism is a system controlled by private owners for profit. The private owners of these large corporations and institutions are the “elite power”. There are only a handful of companies that own every single brand you buy, illustrating just how powerful they are. PepsiCo owns Gatorade, Fritos, lays, Doritos, Lipton and several more. Corporations like this manufacture their products around the globe, usually for cheap labor. With the “power elite” in charge of the products we consume as well as the policies within the US, that leaves everyone else in the US with little power. Commodity fetishism will continue if we allow those with money and power to dictate how the US is run.

