

SINCLAIR'S CRITICISM TOWARD AMERICAN CAPITALISM IN 1990'S REFLECTED IN *THE JUNGLE*

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Abstract

*This research aims to identify manipulation in American classes' relation reflected in a novel entitled *The Jungle* by Upton Sinclair and to explain Sinclair's criticism toward American capitalism reflected in the novel. The theory of Ideological State Apparatus and Repressive State Apparatus by Althusser is used to answer the objectives. Qualitative content analysis method was used to analyze the data. The data analysis was conducted through six steps: identifying, reading and re-reading, coding and categorizing, and sorting the data, making the interrelation between the description of the data and the theory, and making an interpretation of the findings. Researcher reveals various concerns regarding to the ideology, which are manipulations from the ruling class through institutions seen in the total control of the economy, politics, and law. Sinclair criticizes American capitalism and introduces the concept of socialism in his novel as the solution of the problems that created by the capitalist people.*

Keywords: Ideology, The Jungle, Sinclair, Althusser.

BACKGROUND

Classes emerges as result of stratification in the society. When a society is divided and a particular class dominates the economy, manipulation is unavoidable. As the economy is dominated by the upper class, the lower class condition will depend upon the upper class. It happens because the upper class, which has more resource to gain more money, controls the aspect of

economy in society such as factory, natural resource, and capital financial.

Both of ruling class and working class have their own part in the society. That relation affects both. This conflict and dependency are coming together (Eagleton, 1976: 82-4). The class relation is not only in the way workers work for ruling class people benefit but also in the

way ruling class people control workers through media, politics, and their needs

The manipulation from the ruling class over the working class is unavoidable. It happens because ruling class as the controller of the capital financial has more authority and control. However, the manipulation happens not only because ruling class has the power to do it, but also because the working class takes the condition of being controlled as a fact that cannot be changed. With the control is on the ruling class and government cannot do anything about that, the manipulation and centered economic power are unavoidable.

Centered economic power and the way a class controls other classes are the essence of the situation above. The economic, political, and social system that supports that condition can be described as capitalism. Capitalism is an economic system that developed during the European industrial transformation that began in the late 18th century. It is based on the belief in progress, respect for individual choices, and property rights, including the right to buy and sell freely. It seeks to create wealth by controlling and improving the means of economic production, such as land, factories, and

machinery. On the surface, the meaning of capitalism seems straightforward referring to an economic system in which private individuals, rather than governments, own property and businesses (Weinberg, 2003: 1). However, the way ruling class uses all resources to strengthen their influence in the society and to control working class people is more complicated especially in America.

The use of American Capitalism term in this research is due to the fact that capitalism in United States is different from any other places like Europe. The uniqueness of American capitalism is on how the society accepts it as one of their value. American values such as individualism and American dream also support the development of capitalism in this country. Coming from the condition of the classes in America, many authors take class conflict as their big theme. Thus, no wonder that the condition of labor in America is reflected in many literary works.

Although many people still debate on what literature is, literature itself become a medium to criticize or transfer believe (Eagleton, 1976: 30). Furthermore, literature is what readers read and amuse them. Literature comes as a part of society

because it reflects the condition of the society, written down by the one from the society. This is the reason many writers choose it as one of many ways to show a certain condition from their point of view.

Sinclair's work describes the unlimited authority of the ruling class. The ruling class people control, manipulate, and use the institutions to sustain their power. On the other side, working class only becomes the commodity of the production and the market object. Economy and political power manipulated by the ruling class becomes Sinclair's critique. Sinclair's work seems too political because he has background as a socialist. However, with his background as a writer and socialist make *The Jungle* has many hidden interest from the author.

RESEARCH METHOD

In analyzing the data from Upton Sinclair's novel *The Jungle*, the researcher employed qualitative approach. There are several steps performed by the researcher in analyzing the data. The steps that were conducted to analyze the data are explained as follows:

1. Identifying the data from the novel by making some notes.
2. Reading and re-reading the whole data and arranging the data into two major

topics: class' relation based on the novel and Sinclair's perception to the class conflict in the classes' relation.

3. Coding and categorizing the data in the data table into thematic categories related to the classes'' relation in the novel (Establishing ruling class power through class-consciousness and building working class attitude) and also coding and classifying Sinclair's perception to the class conflict in the classes'' relation (Capitalism as the wicked system and socialism as the cure of the society).

4. Sorting the data by selecting the relevant data and excluding the irrelevant data. The selected relevant data were classified and interpreted according to its thematic meaning.

5. Drawing the interrelation between the description of the data and the theory to get the findings based on the objectives: classes' relation in the novel and Sinclair's perception to the class conflict in the classes' relation

6. Finally, interpreting the findings based on the researcher's comprehension about the theory.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. Manipulation in Classes' Relation Presented in *The Jungle* by Upton Sinclair

With the classes in the society, dependency relation is unavoidable especially between the ruling classes and working classes. The conflict and dependency both come together (Dobie, 1980:82-4). The class relation is not only in the way workers work for ruling class' benefit but also in the way ruling class people control and manipulate workers through media, politics, and their need.

The way the ruling class people are influence the lower classes is setting up their power through many institutions that represents Ideological State Apparatus or Repressive State Apparatus. The ruling class uses many institutions such as law, politic, media, and system. Those institutions purpose is to create class-consciousness and make the lower class easily controlled.

a. Law and Politics

Law is usually created to give a borderline between obligation and rights. Law consists of several special orders and punishments. However, as capitalist manipulates it, law is not merely to divide the right and obligation, but also become the weapon of the capitalists to control society under their name for their beneficial.

What was the sense of that? they asked. They had been thinking of letting little Stanislovas go to work. Well, there was no need to worry, Grandmother Majauszkiene said-the law made no difference except that it forced people to lie about the ages of their children. One would like to know what the lawmakers expected them to do; there were families that had no possible means of support except the children, and the law provided them no other way of getting a living. (Sinclair, 1906: 65)

Form the statement above it is clearly seen how law is implemented in daily life. The law prohibits children under sixteen to work. However, since the economic condition of a family needs more money to support their life, extra workers are needed to achieve it. Family will make a fake certificate to falsify their children's age. Such an action shows that the need of worker is more important than a law that keeps them from gaining money and makes them punished.

b. Mass Media

Marxist theories emphasize the importance of social class in relation to both media ownership and audience interpretation of media texts and these remains as an important factor in media analysis. Because media have become one of the medium of ruling class tools, to analyze media is important. Marxist in

media includes the analysis of representation in the mass media, political coverage, or social groups in order to reveal underlying ideologies (Berger, 1982: 84).

There was the gigantic Racing Trust. It owned the legislatures in every state in which it did business; it even owned some of the big newspapers, and made public opinion—there was no power in the land that could oppose it unless, perhaps, it were the Poolroom Trust. And even in the exercise of this privilege he was not left unprotected; a good part of the inadequate police force of Chicago was suddenly diverted from its work of hunting criminals, and rushed out to serve him (Sinclair 1906: 254-5)

As stated in the quotation above, the ruling class people already take total control over media and police. Power to create public opinion and police force to maintain condition in the field under the rule of capitalists make them stronger and invincible.

c. Workers and Machine Invention

In industry, the one that capitalists cannot manipulate are limited natural resources and expensive machines. On the other hand workers are easy to be found and replaced. This makes workers' value in production process less valuable than any other commodities.

The sausage-room was an interesting place to visit, for two or three

minutes, and provided that you did not look at the people; the machines were perhaps the most wonderful things in the entire plant. Presumably sausages were once chopped and stuffed by hand, and if so it would be interesting to know how many workers had been displaced by these inventions (Sinclair, 1906: 126)

With the invention of machines, most of workers are replaced. Machines replace workers' hard job such as butchering and loading meats

d. Capitalists' Influence on Governments Decision

Government as superstructure institution takes an important part for capitalists. When the government is under the influence of capitalists, the interests of the capitalists will succeed because the government can grant any policy that support capitalist. As stated in the novel, the media and city officers help capitalist to hide the issue of city's water problem created by factories pollutant. The rumor is true but with the government is already manipulated by the corrupt staffs, the rumor is hidden and what readers know is limited on what capitalists want them to know.

the boss would start up a conversation with the government inspector, and the two would stroll away. So in a trice the carcass of the cow would be

cleaned out, and entrails would have vanished (Sinclair, 1906: 59)

Sinclair also states in the quotation above about how the government officers can be easily bought by the capitalists. With this trick, it is almost impossible to take back the position of government as the one who controls the society.

B. Sinclair's Criticism towards American Capitalism

As a socialist, Sinclair's creates some paradigms about Democrat and Republic party in his novel. He states that the parties have two opposite purpose. From those issues that he brings in the novel, Sinclair's criticism toward American capitalism will be explained in these two categories, capitalism as the wicked system and socialist as the cure of the society.

1. Bad Impacts of Capitalism

Presenting the bad impacts of capitalism, Sinclair does not only giving the impacts in one big scope of society, but also explains the impacts in the structural area of the society especially in the context of classes. Following the impacts in structural area, he states the impact on the each citizen.

a. Total Control Over Business Activity

Business activity refers to the aggregate economic activities (buying, selling, renting, and investing) of an organization or of the commercial and manufacturing sectors of an economy. The total control happens because the 'laissez-faire' that lets the capitalist to be independent in economy without government's interpretation. Sinclair shows the power of capitalists to control workers and in the business activity, Sinclair puts capitalists as an independent price maker that control the market price.

"At the very first," she said. She spoke as if in a trance. "It was all—it was their plot—Miss Henderson's plot. She hated me. And he—he wanted me. He used to speak to me—out on the platform. Then he began to—to make love to me. He offered me money. He begged me—he said he loved me. Then he threatened me. He knew all about us, he knew we would starve. He knew your boss—he knew Marija's. He would hound us to death, he said—then he said if I would—if I—we would all of us be sure of work—always. Then one day he caught hold of me—he would not let go—he—he—" (Sinclair, 1906: 144)

Capitalist manipulates institutions in the society. With the power capitalists have, they can do anything they like and this does not only happen in economy but also in daily life directly or indirectly. By indirect control, capitalists use the institutions to strengthen their position and

control the flow of economy. By direct control, capitalists use verbal action or bribe an individual. It makes capitalists invincible not only as a financial capital owner but also as a person. This inequality or domination becomes the essence of capitalism.

b. Crime As Result of Capitalism

Crime as the result from people's suffering becomes the concern of Sinclair's novel. However, the way Sinclair presents his idea about the crime is quite interesting. He presents the crime as a freedom. The working class represented by Jurgis realizes that he is trapped in the capitalism. By doing the crime, they resist the system itself and being master of themselves. They do not even need to think about rules created by someone else.

Thousands of them came to Chicago answering advertisements for "servants" and "factory hands," and found themselves trapped by fake employment agencies, and locked up in a bawdyhouse (Sinclair, 1906: 242-3)

The complex condition happens because the capitalist already takes control the institution such as police and any government officer. This makes crime a common thing in the city. It happens not because the crime is intentionally created

but by the status quo that someone has let them do whatever they want.

2. Political Groups and Socialism

Sinclair presents republican and democratic in different way and clearly shows on which side he is. Sinclair is a socialist and active in politics. This background makes his novel so debatable. He presents many statements about what capitalism is and how capitalism makes the condition of the working class people is totally ruined. He gives his statement in the quotation below.

You went about with your soul full of suspicion and hatred; you understood that you were environed by hostile powers that were trying to get your money, and who used all the virtues to bait their traps with. The storekeepers plastered up their windows with all sorts of lies to entice you; the very fences by the wayside, the lampposts and telegraph poles, were pasted over with lies. The great corporation that employed you lied to you, and lied to the whole country—from top to bottom it was nothing but one gigantic lie (Sinclair, 1906: 71)

a. Democrat vs Republic

Sinclair uses the political group to put the capitalism and socialism issues in the politics. He uses the democratic party to represents capitalism and the financial owner joining politics. Socialist joining in politics represents the republican party.

By using these two big parties in America, Sinclair's political activity is getting serious. By using the political group, Sinclair presents the detail of politics action in that group.

the stockyards Democrats were furious at the idea of a rich capitalist for their candidate, and while they were changing they might possibly conclude that a Socialist firebrand was preferable to a Republican bum (Sinclair, 1906: 247)

By showing the party's candidate in each party, Sinclair shows his reader about the people who participate in the party. Knowing the people means knowing the intention of the political group and after Sinclair presents many data of capitalists that have a clash with the working class and contribute more manipulation in economic, reader's perception will be directed to protect the working class.

b. Socialism as the Cure for Society

Sinclair in his novel presents socialism as the cure of the society. He introduces socialism and put socialist as the agent of change especially for the working class. By using muckraking techniques gory details, disgustingly true imagery Sinclair forced his audience to re-evaluate certain governmental systems. The socialists in his novel represented as

people who care about the condition of working class and they come not only from ruling class but also from working class. With the member of the socialist is not only from the ruling class, the working class is more represented. This argument is supported by the quotation below.

First, that a Socialist believes in the common ownership and democratic management of the means of producing the necessities of life; and, second, that a Socialist believes that the means by which this is to be brought about is the class conscious political organization of the wage-earners Thus far they were at one; but no farther. To Lucas, the religious zealot, the co-operative commonwealth was the New Jerusalem, the kingdom of Heaven, which is "within you." To the other, Socialism was simply a necessary step toward far-distant goal, a step to be tolerated with impatience (Sinclair, 1906: 316)

Sinclair puts capitalism as a wicked system and only socialism can replace that system. The current government is not working properly. The use of socialism as the cure of the society seems so perfect to replace capitalism

CONCLUSIONS

From the analysis, it can be concluded that the ruling class manipulates the society especially the working class through the apparatus in Ideological State Apparatus and Repressive State

Apparatus. The manipulation of the ruling class people leads Sinclair to criticize the system that supports the capital owner only. On the same time, Sinclair introduces the socialism as the proper system to replace capitalism.

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