

Marx & Modern Times



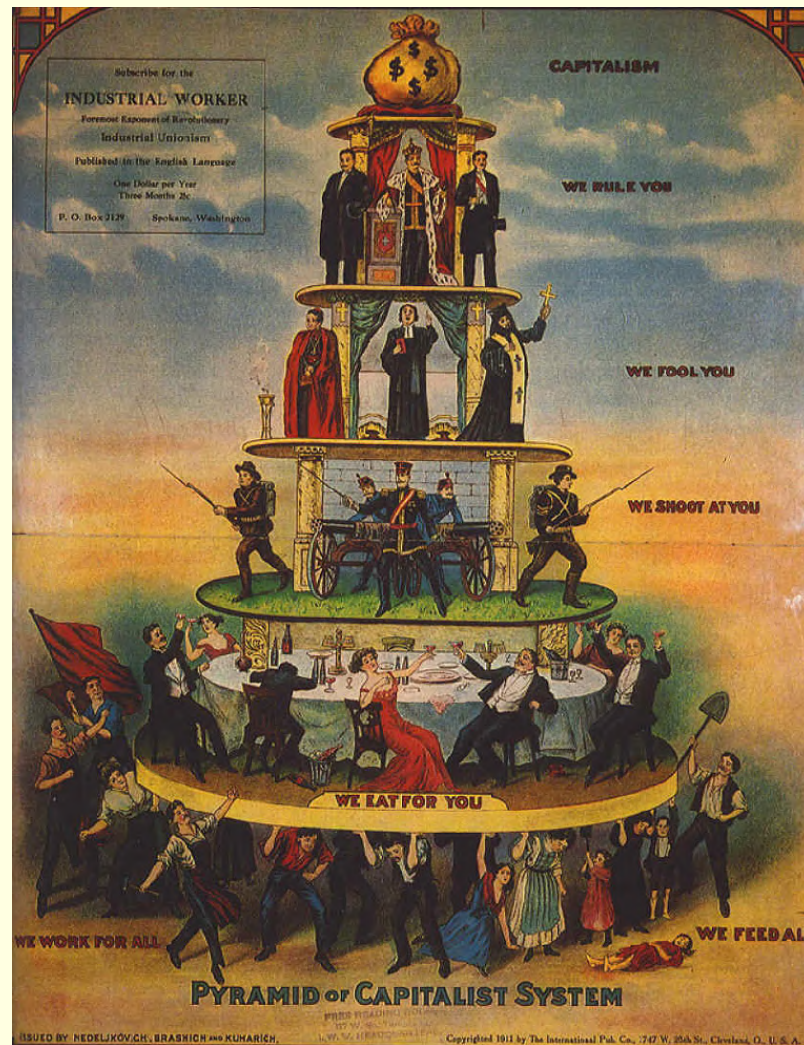
Marx's Conflict Theory

- All societies are divided into two groups
 - Owners
 - Workers
- Our society is capitalist
 - Owners are bourgeoisie
 - Workers are proletarians

Owners and Workers

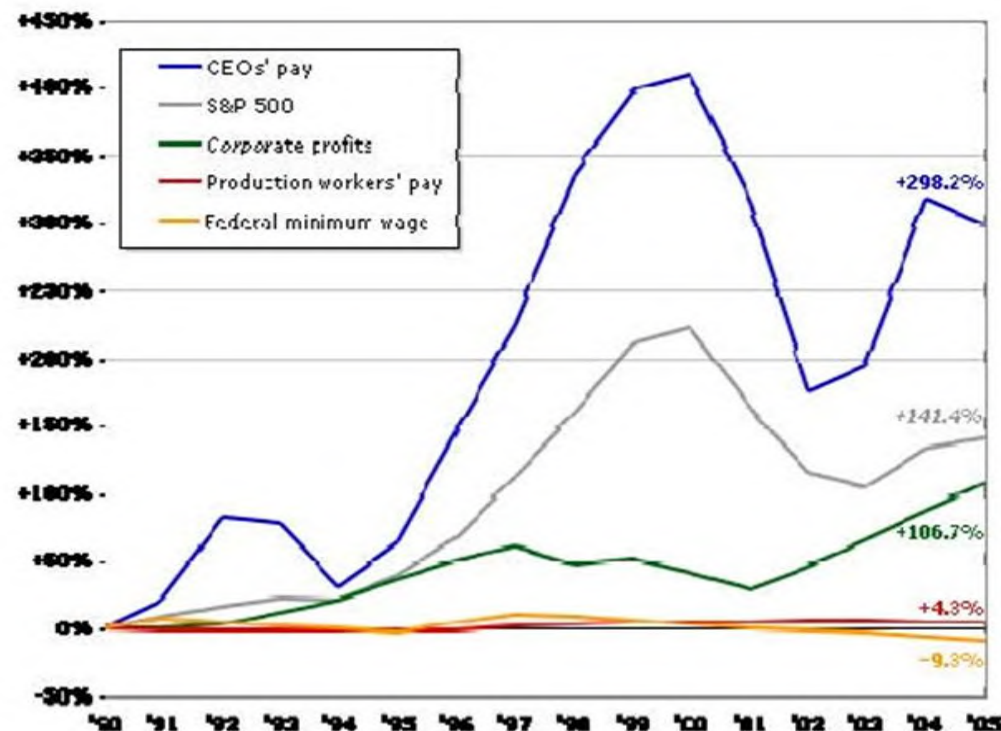
- Owners exploit workers and live off the money (surplus-value) which workers create
- Workers put up with this inequality because:
 - They are oppressed wage slaves and cannot fight the system.
 - They are indoctrinated by ideology and religion into believing what they are told by the powerful.

Marx & Inequality



Inequality in America

CEOs' average pay, production workers' average pay, the S&P 500 Index, corporate profits, and the federal minimum wage, 1990-2005 (all figures adjusted for inflation)



Unequal Democracy?

Robert Dahl in *Who Governs?* studying Connecticut politics in the 1950s asked:

- “In a political system where nearly every adult may vote but where knowledge, wealth, social position, access to officials, and other resources are unequally distributed, who actually governs?”
- Dahl concluded that power is widely dispersed.

But is that still true?

- Political Scientist, Larry Bartels, wrote the book *Unequal Democracy: the Political Economy of the New Gilded Age* (2008).
- Bartels uses data from the Senate Election Study, which has detailed questions about the attitudes of almost 10,000 US citizens of voting age, on various issues legislations and their general attitudes. He compares this to voting patterns of the representatives from the 101st, 102nd and 103rd Congresses (elected in 1988, 1990 and 1992).

Inequality & Politics

Bartels (2008)	101 st Congress	102 nd Congress	103 rd Congress	1989-94 (Pooled)
Low- Income	-.11 (.61)	-.50 (.59)	-.39 (.55)	-.33 (.44)
Middle- Income	2.47 (.72)	2.91 (.71)	2.58 (.65)	2.66 (.60)
High- Income	4.73 (1.03)	4.43 (.99)	3.22 (.92)	4.15 (.85)

Ordinary least squares regression coefficients (with standard errors in parentheses)

Unequal Democracy

Bartels's Conclusion: both on their general Poole-Rosenthal ideological scores and on their voting on specific issues—ranging from minimum wage, civil rights, budget waiver, budget cloture, and various abortion roll calls. Senators highly “responsive” to (i.e., highly correlated with) their high income voters, somewhat responsive to their middle-income voters and not responsive at all to their low income voters (in fact negatively associated if anything, though not significant).

Why?

- Bartels argues that politicians are responsive to campaign contributions.
- As a whole, politicians are also themselves quite wealthy.

“There are two things that matter in politics. The first is money. I can’t remember the second..”

-Mark Hanna (President McKinley’s campaign manager)

Wealth & Congress

- Average wealth of a US Senator: ~13 million (2009)
- Average wealth of a member of the House of Representatives: ~5 million (2009)

Wealth & Congress

<u>Darrell Issa (R-Calif)</u>	\$303,575,011
<u>Jane Harman (D-Calif)</u>	\$293,454,761
<u>John Kerry (D-Mass)</u>	\$238,812,296
<u>Mark Warner (D-Va)</u>	\$174,385,102
<u>Jared Polis (D-Colo)</u>	\$160,909,068
<u>Herb Kohl (D-Wis)</u>	\$160,302,011
<u>Vernon Buchanan (R-Fla)</u>	\$148,373,160
<u>Michael McCaul (R-Texas)</u>	\$137,611,043
<u>Jay Rockefeller (D-WVa)</u>	\$98,832,010
<u>Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif)</u>	\$77,082,134

Money & Politics

2008 Presidential Election (\$ Raised)

- Barack Obama (\$745 million)
- John McCain (\$368 million)



Social Justice & Free Speech

The Case of Campaign Finance Reform

Citizens United v. FEC (2010)

Decision by the United States Supreme Court that corporate funding of independent political broadcasts in candidate elections cannot be limited under the First Amendment.

“If the First Amendment has any force, it prohibits Congress from fining or jailing citizens, or associations of citizens, for simply engaging in political speech.”

-Justice Anthony Kennedy

“At bottom, the Court's opinion is thus a rejection of the common sense of the American people, who have recognized a need to prevent corporations from undermining self government since the founding, and who have fought against the distinctive corrupting potential of corporate electioneering since the days of Theodore Roosevelt. It is a strange time to repudiate that common sense. While American democracy is imperfect, few outside the majority of this Court would have thought its flaws included a dearth of corporate money in politics.”

-Justice Stevens (in dissent)

So, what do we think?

- Let's consult two philosophers: John Stuart Mill and Karl Marx

Mill and free speech

- Mill argued in his work 'On Liberty' that free speech is crucial to the greatest happiness for the greatest number, for happiness in the long term can only be achieved through knowledge, and only free speech promotes knowledge; restricting free speech ultimately stifles knowledge and learning.
- But free speech isn't always free. It costs money, so does this matter?

Marx and Free Speech

- “The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force”
- Society’s ideology is important, because it confuses alienated groups and can create false consciousness such as commodity fetishism

Inequality and free speech: Campaign Finance Reform

- The wealthy are capable of purchasing advertisements on behalf of politicians and issues. The poor are less able to do so. Rich people are capable of more “free speech” than the poor.
- Is this a problem?
- Should we attempt to limit the free speech of individuals in order to limit this inequality?

Is your
washroom
breeding

Bolsheviks?

*Employees lose respect
for a company that
fails to provide
decent facilities for
their comfort*

TRY wiping your hands six days a week on harsh, cheap paper towels or awkward, unsanitary roller towels—and maybe you, too, would grumble.

Towel service is just one of those small, but important courtesies—such as proper air and lighting—that help build up the goodwill of your employees.

That's why you'll find clothlike Scot-Tissue Towels in the washrooms of large, well-run organizations such as R.C.A. Victor Co., Inc., National Lead Co. and Campbell Soup Co.

Scot-Tissue Towels are made of "thirsty fibre" . . . an amazing cellulose product that drinks up moisture 12 times as fast as ordinary paper towels. They feel soft and pliant as a linen towel. Yet they're so strong and tough in texture they won't crumble or go to pieces . . . even when they're wet.

And they cost less, too—because one is enough to dry the hands—instead of three or four.

Write for free trial carton. Scott Paper Company, Chester, Pennsylvania.



Scot-Tissue Towels - really dry!