

## II Programma Comunista – Is the Employee Proletarian?

This question was discussed by the Milan group with reference to a publication of various opinions from bourgeois and pro-Russian journals, of which the details carry little weight.

For as long as we have been talking about socialism, it has been regarded as the movement of workers of physical muscle effort, and centuries of controversy have been based on this criterion regarding the direction of society by what the Middle Ages called “vile mechanics”.

The controversy never frightened us, because we think that today's educative culture is always a negative element in forming the revolutionary.

But, according to that criterion, it is clear that the worker who is rhetorically said to be of the pen or the brain, and whom we often call of that of the... butt, is not a proletarian. The proletarian is blue collar, the employee is white collar. Now it is clear that the Marxist criterion is not clothing or wiggling this or that part of the body. The criterion is that of Lenin, that is, that of the position in the economic order of the present society. Now a peasant, even the most coarse one, working by hand on his land and with his hoe, without a white collar and perhaps not even a blue one, is not a proletarian if we look at his position in the social order. In fact, he is not separated from the instruments of his labour (land and hoe) like the proletarian is. He is not separated, as the proletarian is, from any “hold” on the products of his labour, which he consumes or sells as he likes. The proletarian enters the market only with money, the non-proletarian with money and commodities from time to time.

This criterion is the only Marxist one. As long as the employee is not the master of his pen and desk, as long as he is not allowed to make some of the products of the enterprise his own, as long as he only goes to the market with his salary money and never with commodities to sell, Marxistically, he is proletarian for sure.

Is that so psychologically and in terms of party membership? This is where confusion arises; even a pure muscle worker can be a bigot or a member of a bourgeois party, but that is not important.

There are, however, high-paid employees who, in addition to remuneration for time (wage and salary do not change), share in the profits. This stems from the surplus value of the company above the mass of labour power and takes away the proletarian character.

Can a very high salary have the same effect? In order to answer this question, one should, in the analysis of the bourgeois company (Marx's first moment), differentiate between: producers of surplus value and consumers of surplus value generated by others. Depending on where such a cutoff is made, a different 'theory of surplus value' results. We will not go into quantitative examinations now: the cut should be at the level of the average social wage among all companies (second moment).

The elaborate research hears of the “immediateist” position of the problem. For Marxism, the statistical, trade union, social classification is secondary in the dynamics of the class struggle, whose centre of focus is political, and whose historical key is above all the class defectors who overthrow their immediate interests. This is the point to watch.

It is Marx's third moment that directs our struggle. That is, communist society, in which everyone will put muscle and brain to work for the joy of all.

*Source: Il Programma Comunista, No. 18, 1960.*