

Book review the communist manifesto sociology essay



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The Communist Manifesto was written by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in 1848. Whether or not the publication was planned to coincide with the first revolutions in France we can only surmise. However what we do know is that both Marx and Engels were commissioned to compile the Communist Party Manifesto at the Second Congress of the Communist League which met between November and December 1847.

The Manifesto is split into four sections but the overall aim of the book is an attempt to explain the ideologies and goals of the Communist party. Marx and Engels argue that it is “ the history of class struggles”[1]that are the driving force of history. Marx claims that relationships between classes are dependant upon that period’s channel of production. He also argues that once these relationships are no longer well-suited a revolution happens and a new ruling class take power. This is Marx’s explanation for the move from feudalism to capitalism at the hands of the bourgeoisie (middle classes). This is also how Marx views the progression from capitalism to socialism and from socialism to communism. Marx and Engels believe that Communism is inevitable, that eventually the proletariat (working class) will seize power straight from the hands of the bourgeoisie.

The first section of the manifesto is based on the Communists theories of history and of the relationship between the bourgeois and the proletariat in a capitalist society. Marx informs the reader of class struggles that have dominated history, how classes are either oppressor or oppressed. Marx states that as a result of the move from the complicated feudal system to the capitalist system hostilities between classes have simplified to the point where there are no only two classes in direct opposition; the bourgeoisie and

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the proletariat. The manifesto pinpoints the fact that because of the demands of society and the rise of "modern industry" the modern bourgeois have become the ruling class by doing away with the old feudal system and allowing people to become more self-interested. Despite this new self-interest Marx argues that the modern bourgeois has done away with the traditional family values and instead turned each family member into a commodity, someone to go out and earn a wage. He states that this new bourgeois society has "resolved personal worth into exchange value." This new capitalist society, Marx states, leaves one man dependant on another in a way they had never been previously; it has created "a class of labourers, who live only so long as they find work, and who find work only so long as their labour increases capital." Thus we have a society based on production and demand. However this society will not always see the relevant demand for the products they produce so those who rely on industry to supply wages in order for them to have a roof over their heads and food in their bellies, are expendable, they will be used, and be able to afford to live, only so long as the bourgeoisie need their skills.

Section two then goes on to discuss the relationship between the Communists and the proletarians. Marx is keen to point out that the Communists do not see other working class parties as opposition rather they wish to help these other parties in "...clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement." Marx addresses the question on the abolition of property directly and clearly states that it is not the aim of the communists to abolish all property but to abolish private property, that property owned by the

bourgeois. He points out that property only belongs to one tenth of society as the other nine tenths cannot afford such luxury as owning their own properties. Upon addressing this he also claims that as a result of this, and many other defining features, " Capital, is therefore not a personal, it is a social power. Upon defining the role of the proletariat in society Marx states that the Communist party wish to do away with " the miserable character.... under which the labourer lives merely to increase capital, and is allowed to live only in so far as the interest of the ruling class requires it."

The third section of the Manifesto outlines and evaluates the three divisions of Communist writings. These are; reactionary socialism, conservative socialism and critical-utopian socialism and communism. Marx argues that each of these divisions fail because each of the fail to realise critical communist values. The reactionaries and the conservatives fail to take note of the fact that the bourgeoisie will eventually fall at the hands of the proletariat whereas the utopians fail to realize that social change is essential; there is no perfect world where communism is king without this change.

The fourth and final section of the manifesto confronts the Communist party's feelings towards the opposing parties that exist in society. The communists final and foremost aim is the proletarian revolution and they strive for this constantly and consistently even if it means working with other opposition parties in order to achieve this. Marx and other communists believe that history goes through stages of social change and that by arming the proletariat in one particular stage (capitalism) it will ensure the overthrow of the bourgeoisie at the hands of the proletariat thus reigning in a new era of socialism and eventually communism.

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All in all The Communist Manifesto is extremely clear