Example of essay on organized labor's growth and consolidation: the great depress...

Literature, Russian Literature

The New Deal legislations were a series of domestic economic programs passed in the US between 1933 and 1936 during the first term of President Franklin Roosevelt. Several of the legislations under the New Deal relate to labor and they promoted an upsurge in trade unionism (Dulles & Dubofsky, 264). Differences between labor unions and especially in the American Federation of Labor (AFL) led to the establishment of the Committee for Industrial Organization (CIO) to ensure that the American laborers benefited from the New Deal legislations. The labor legislations were placed under the National Recovery Administration (NRA). Under the NRA, the welfare of organized labor became a priority for the government for the first time in the history of American Labor.

Some of the acts to enforce the implementation of the New Deal Legislations related to the organization of labor and the social security of workers. These laws were contained in the Social Security Act of 1935 and the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938. These Acts established unemployment Insurance where workers contributed to a fund and employers also contributed money for each of their employees (Dulles & Dubofsky, 264). The Acts also established an old-age pensions whereby retirees would collect pension based on their contributions. The National Industrial Recovery Act 1933 established the National Recovery Administration. This body set up codes of practice for the number of hours workers could work, unfair competition among businesses, setting of minimum wage and outlawing of child labor. The administration also gave trade unions the right to bargain with employees. The National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) of 1935 mandated employers to deal with trade unions. The law also gave workers the right to form and join trade unions. A board was setup to ensure that companies complied with the regulations of the NLRA and that employees were treated fairly.

Several laws directly regulated the union movements in the US as part of the New Deal Legislations. One of these laws was the Wagner Act of 1935. This law expanded the labor protections established in the Norris VeLa Guardia Act which encouraged employees to get into unions. Previously, the American Federation of Labor (AFL) had only supported for the unionization of skilled workers only but under the New Deal, the Wagner Act called for the unionization of all employees including those unskilled workers who worked in the mass industries (Dulles & Dubofsky, 264). The law also outlawed company unions in addition to prohibiting employers from firing workers after a strike. The other law was the Fair Labor Standards Act. This act was introduced in 1938 and it introduced a 44-hour seven-day workweek and set the minimum wage at $15 a week or 40 cents per hour (Dulles & Dubofsky, 247). It also abolished child labor for people below sixteen years of age.

The National Industrial Recovery Act was instrumental in helping US recover from the Great Depression. Section 7 (a) of the Act gave the government overall economic control of industries and labor in order to prevent ensure sustainable recovery of the economy and prevent events that led to the Great Depression. Among other things, the law shaped the economic background in which Labor Unions were to operate. Part of the New Deal legislations was the passing of the Economy Act in 1933 (Dulles & Dubofsky, 245). This act compelled everybody who worked for the government to take a 15% pay cut, while the government expenditure reduced by 25% in order to finance the New Deal. The Beer Act was also introduced and it killed prohibition and allowed for the selling of beer to raise revenue through taxation.

Though the laws in the New Deal have been largely successful, thanks to numerous amendments, some of them have not fully benefited the labor movement and in some cases they have been a Trojan Horse. Such a case was evidenced by the automobile manufacturers who succeeded in having a clause inserted among the NRA's industrial codes that relate to them. The clause stated that employees in the automobile industry have a right to retain, select or advance their employee's on " the basis of individual merit" (Dulles & Dubofsky, 247). This clause opened doors for discrimination of antiunion members on any pretext convenient to employers. Save for the compliance with the minimum wage which even many employers set at between $12 and $15 instead of a minimum of $15, the employers largely ignored all the other labor laws (Dulles & Dubofsky, 247). Employees were required to work harder during work hours to increase production and they were supervised very bitterly by their bosses in order to make them " give value for money" and reduce the production costs. As a result of the New Deal legislations in regard to labor and unionization, many employers gradually whittled away safeguards for the collective bargaining of their employees.

Works Cited

Dulles, Foster R, and Melvyn Dubofsky. Labor in America: A History. Arlington Heights, Ill: Harlan Davidson, 1984. Print.