

The Effects of the Industrial Revolution on Social Class

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Before the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, most economies in the world practiced handiwork production processes. However, this changed during the onset of the next century; a period during which agriculture and other sectors of economy integrated the use of mechanized means of primary and secondary production. In different parts of the world, and at home, Britain gained popularity as the first country to incorporate new forms of production. Most countries learned the success of the mechanization idea, and towards the mid of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a range of nations had adopted the use of the technique. Although the industrial revolution had a significant impact on the global economies, its introduction led to adverse ramifications on some aspects of social class. Thus, this paper seeks to study the revolution's effect on social class.

In essence, the industrial revolution increased the size of the wealthy class. The occurrence of the revolution seems to have worked to the advantage of the middle and the upper class. This is inherently clear when analyzing the effect on the size of the different classes of individuals, with respect to the economic status and power to purchase (Findling & Thackeray, 2002). The establishment and integration of new technological models of manufacturing led to the subsequent reduction in the prices of some commodities, which eventually increased individual's power to make purchases. Basically, individuals that earlier found it difficult to obtain certain products due to reasons based on price ceilings later gained power of buying such products, implying the surge in economic benefits to a part of the existing populations.

Additionally, despite the surge in the buying power among certain populations, due to industrial growth, the size of the poor doubled at a rate that surpassed the ratio of growth in the size of the rich. Essentially, individuals with limited work skills were required to perform most of the menial jobs which yielded low wages (Findling & Thackeray, 2002). Consequently, low

wages implied that the poor missed on much of the amenities enjoyed by the rich, such as some entertainment facilities. Moreover, machinery replaced certain forms of human labor, causing job losses and unemployment. Therefore, the economic strain among the poor increased due to work strain.

On the other hand, although the revolution had adverse consequences on the economically disadvantaged populations, it inspired the growth of some aspects of economies, to which each class accrued benefits. For instance, growth and development in the manufacturing sector provided a platform of initiation of new ventures and amenities that were significant to the whole groups of classes. Besides, the growth in the number of learning, medical, and recreational institutions provided a great deal of services to people, irrespective of socioeconomic status (Secombe, 2005). Thus, the same measure of presence of education to the poor was significantly important to the rich, and so was the value of medication. In this regard, the revolution was more of a significant viability to all social classes.

In conclusion, effects of the industrial revolution on social class are inherent in some aspects of its repercussions within the economic framework. Besides doubling the number of the poor and the rich, it caused a rise in the economic gap between the two. However, despite the revolution's negative impact on the social class, it is a reason for the growth of economies of different countries such as Britain and America. Therefore, the revolution did have a general significance value.

Reference

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Secombe, W. (2005). *Weathering the storm: Working-class families from the industrial revolution to the fertility decline*. London: Verso.

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