

# Marxist Doctrine of the State and Labour Relations in Nigeria: A Conceptual Look

Dr John Mark

Department of Management, Faculty of Management Sciences, Rivers State University of Science and Technology, Port Harcourt.

## Abstract:

Whiles in every age that men abound, two schools of intellectuals, as observed by Marx, are likely to arise. One, those who try to understand society; second, those who try to change it. This paper shall be ruled by the former whereupon the researcher intends to examine, content-wise, the position of the state in the control of labour; for it is no longer a doubt that labours relations, Nigeria now, is at the grip of the state and at what time it will take to reset we do not know. In this paper, the researcher does only intend to point out, content wise still, the three principals forces wherein labour has missed it. First, in the area of philosophy as textised by Marx. Second, in the area of structure as argued by the researcher. And then in the area of strategy as suggested by the paper. It is never to be forgotten that the conceptual frame work whereupon the paper is based is as given in Marx's thesis on the state. All others in line are as will be pointed out by the following objectives. One, to look at Marx's doctrine of the state as it affects labour unions today. Second, to redirect, with suggestions, the attention of labour leaders on how best to challenge the state's use of "no work, no pay" as instruments of oppression.

**Keywords:** Doctrine of the State, Labour Relations, Nigeria Context.

## INTRODUCTION

Criticism is an intellectual business; a business for the intellectual, a business for the on-looker, a business for the confused. Although, expertise may well be required of the former, it is, however, not enough to end it here; for we are all watch dogs to ourselves and to another; low some men may seem more a shopper to another than they seem to themselves. But in any case, it is scholarly, no matter what, to say that criticism remains a business for the intellectual, for in human learning; therefore, it takes only the fox to decipher traps and the lion to frighten off wolves. Let it then be said that the subject of labour- relations in Nigeria deserves the thesis of meaning; structure and strategy for a present concern; for it could not have been an interposition of tongue or an over-blab we say that the payment of wages or industrial harmony have been the basis of labour – recess in all spheres of the economy. But it will never be forgotten, as vetoed in the paper, that labour misfit in this country, is all a thing of history; in that it is not a thing so pliable to dissuade men from their century of commitment. labour givers then have been so powerful, that to tame them of their wings now will require a well articulate meaning on the past; a well articulate meaning of structure; a well articulate meaning of strategy.

The reason for this is not farfetched. It is to establish that change in any society is attainable. But there will be need, as Marx put it, to understand the philosophy with the older class system and a rising class consequently. According to Marx, class does not just arise; there is usually an internal pressure acting on. This is true classes arise in every age owing to internal forces, but will not soon replace the older class system if there is no enough catalytic pressure to enable transition. Nigeria only knows how well to roar; but not how well to bite. Her challenge and arch-enemy has been that of TRADITION and IDEOLOGY.

## LABOUR – RELATIONS IN NIGERIA; UNDERLYING IDEOLOGY

Labour relations in Nigeria is that ruled by power-grip; not fellowship. And if that be so, the struggle continues! We will then need to see where Labour – unionism has missed it.

By 1912, aside from early existence of associations at the local communities, trade unionism emerged. It emerged out of the temperance to foster industrial harmony between workers and management. In Yusuf (1969 as quoted in Ege Onu) trade unionism earlier on in Nigeria, was not formed by a group of disgruntled warders who longed for a platform to contend with labour – givers; but with the spirit to extend such institutions border on. Such then had given rise to the birth of Nigerian civil service union, 1912; association of European civil servants; 1919; rail way workers union, 1931, Nigerian union of teachers, 1931; and then many more thereafter. Although, let it be said that there is no conclusive land-scape as to how and manner trade unions developed in Nigerian Gbosi (1998)

In what follows then, the turbulent nature of trade unions as it is today in Nigeria, had only begun with the reactions of the potters and domestic servants of the nation's imperial powers. They had reacted in the conscious attempt for industrial solidarity. It was never a trade union as it is today.

From these then we will observe, ideally, that the present tempest of industrial power, is a thing of oversight. Earliest fore-runners of the movement did not articulate time correctly. They did not foresee its attempt of becoming an instrument of counter labour-domination in the hands of management. As well, her article of industrial control willed excess power to the imperialists. It will then be a thing of the eye of the camel to dissuade the state of her colonial down flow of power. It is only requires a thing of counter Ideational control to bring the state to the mercy of labour – unions

## **CONCEPTUAL FRAME WORK**

In George Orwell (1984) no one seizes power with the intention to relinquish it. May it then be said that the whole subject of industrial relations and labour – control in Nigeria, and as will be established in this paper, is that of power dominance. Power – dominance as daily exemplified between the state and labour – unionism and power in every sphere..

Marx then posits that as concerning this grip, long before any intervention, it comes in the narrow sway of philosophy. Marx sees philosophy as that set of ideas, with which the state is ruled. Herein then he argues that society as an organic entity will always give birth to classes, and struggles and all forms of social refulgent for enabling times. May it then be said that labour relations in Nigeria is such a one of these births and such a one with an over- ruled philosophy.

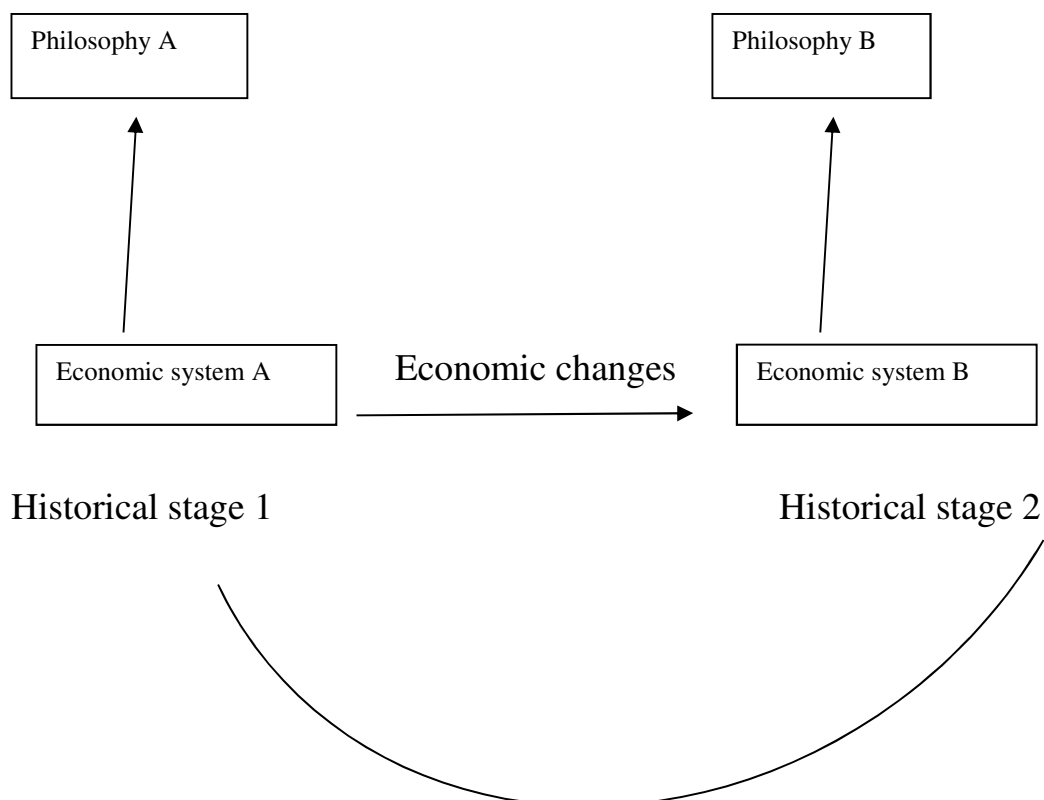
As raised earlier enough, the trouble with labour relations in Nigeria is her philosophy. Marx in his thesis posits that philosophy, apart from being freedom itself, can also be adopted as an instrument of control in the hands of the state. That while both classes may think out a way for her defence, the one who sees first and farther plays the master. is this not then the case with labour unionism in Nigeria? The philosophy of the state in the ratio of “ no work, no pay” still outwits the philosophy of labour on the use of strike for industrial harmony. It will not be forgotten that the latter has been more powerful and conquering than the mere use of strike for reconciliation and collective bargaining.

## **LABOUR – RELATIONS IN NIGERIA AND ITS ECONOMIC INTERPRETATION**

In law head (2002) successful economic principles are philosophies themselves; as well, they can be expressional. The researcher would like to be checked by the latter, wherein it may well be said that the underlying economic principle practiced in Nigeria is that of class-dominance; for while labour represents industrial harmony, the state maintains the place of ownership and as earlier raised, no one seizes power with the intention to relinquish it,

Marx then demystifies it the more, when he divides the forces of production into two. Thus the human labour and the means of production, being the natural resources, tools and machines. Marx refers to this in his thesis as economic structure. Although, above this again, is a super structure consisting of the political institutions of the state and which with the enabling ideologies control the forces of production.

We see this in his picture that philosophy is always the cause of every social change. Thus



### Max's theory that economic forces result in philosophical changes

The economic system of the earliest labour relations in Nigeria, may be likened to the historical stage one wherein the concern if labour was not to institute industrial harmony but to extend fellowships across the country. Yusuf (1969). Here then it is believed according to Yusuf still that labour unionism was not raised on the existence of some dis-satisfied workers coming together with the intention to emancipate labour- members. Marx and Hegel (1984) however saw it, being the whole essence of labour unionism, as that set aside by labour members the attain power – independence. We see this in the article of relevance of trade unions as pointed out in Ome – EgeOnu (2015); that trade unions may still be associated with the following activities

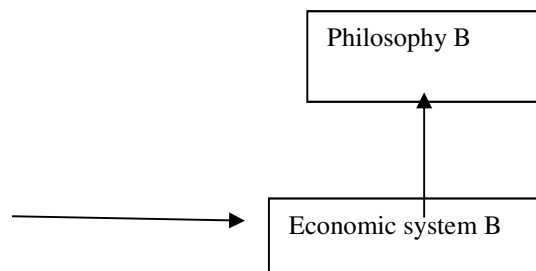
1. A help in the recruitment and appointing of workers
2. A help in instilling discipline among labour members
3. A help in the settling of industrial disputes
4. A help in social adjustment to working conditions, especially that arising from new rules and policies.
5. A help in promoting state fellowship and corporatism between labour members and the state And above all, to remain a vanguard in achieving industrial peace and social responsibility.

A critical look at the above functions will show that labour union in Nigeria shot herself in the leg. While it appears to be more righteous than Rome, the state on her own part is busy developing her sphere and according to Marx and Hegel, in their position about trade unions, the concern for the complete emancipation of the working class should be the goal of any socio-political movement. Marx and Hegel then appear to have seen the state as an instrument of oppression to labour

In the above cites then; being the functions of trade unions, it may well be said that there seems to be a polarity of beliefs between trade unions as practiced of Nigeria and that raised by Marx and Hegel.

While Marx and Hegel are of the position that labour unionism must strive to remain independent of the state, we do not see it so in labour unions as practiced in Nigeria. Although, opinions may argue that a measure of independence is entrusted to labour, another, however may see it from the stance of total freedom, for while the state mans the forces of production by payment and wages, labour then is not free. For the counter philosophy here then is that of "no work; no pay. How then this will be

resolved remains the concern of this paper and the researcher debates it from the point of restructuring; re-philosophizing and re-strategising



One major philosophy with which Nigerians are swayed is that there are divine authorities constituted to rule the affairs of the state and must be respected by all. To oppose such constituted ordinance is to spit at the Maker himself. This is true. But not when such ordinances and powers subjugate human dignity. Nigerians do not see this and that is the beginning of the forces therein. We do not have sound minds who try issues anti-clockwise; we only have express thinkers.

No doubt, the state must be governed by precedence. But that will come after such precedence has been tried and its underlying philosophy reprovved. May it then be said that the earliest philosophy raised to check labour unions in Nigeria did not see far; and to counter it, would yet require a more superior philosophy which only can be attained in intends of structure.

In other words, according to Marx, the political philosophies of the ruling class, have been that concerned as ‘God’s-will’, or put in another tongue- “laws of nature “social contract “eternal necessity”, the “general will all of God’s children”

Marx then concludes that this must be a philosophy of mind – orchestration; that is a position wherein folks are enjoined to see state governance divine laws and none, neither by a philosophy, was to put asunder. Will this then not be said, Marx raised, religion being the opium of the people; that is a form of indoctrination wherein it is taught that the social hierarchy is God ordained. That God made them high and lowly and each is to, remain in his own sphere. This then is the unseen philosophy with which labour relations in Nigeria is practiced. But then in what follows, and as seen in the various historical ages; age one, by cause and effect, in moving to historical age two, the paper then posits that it will yet take a change of in ideology and a change in social structure of things for the state in Nigeria to give due hearing to labour ;for as long as the philosophy of no work no payment yet remains, labour will always remain in the wheel of the state. This then brings us to the end of Marx’s doctrine of socio-philosophy and its place in labour – relations in Nigeria today. The next will be the state’s use of structure in the control of labour.

## **THE STATE USE OF STRUCTURE IN THE CONTROL OF LABOUR**

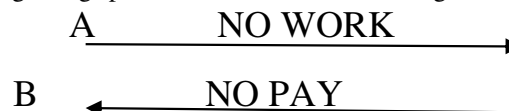
So far, the paper has been able to trace, how well labour has missed it. She had missed in her article of contents; for while she may appear to have been concerned in the national well being, she has not been articulate in her conciliations with the state. It is never to be forgotten, that in Marx’s thesis as well, structure is also a means by which the state checks labour. So then, the philosophy of blind – obedience still runs down the brook.

In Nigerian labour system then, certain structures, both procedural and substantive have been put in place to enable the system function. It operates in the order of board of inquiry; conciliation, arbitration; the National Industrial Court (I.A.P) Every labour action, is to undergo a collective dispute procedure. It is never to forgotten, essentially that the content aim of these structures is for collective bargaining and wage determination between labour members and the management.

The paper then argues that although the system may seem to have incorporated a well meaning approach in the resolve of dispute between Labour members and the management, it is not however far from the subtle attempt to bewitch the latter. There is then need for a content look. Take an instance, the place of collective bargaining Flanders (1970) sees it as the means by which party interest of supply and demand slacks back with each accepting a measure of compromise. This definition is true as tongues will have it, but operationally is not workable.

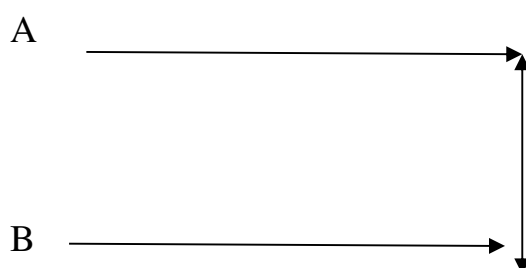
For instance, in moments where one party in future refuses to adhere to such all binding terms, what next? Second, in moments where one party projects a much counter maxim than the other, what next? Such issues as these, cannot be resolved by a mere act of fellowship and corporatism.

Take an instance again, the management use of “no work, no pay” has always been more working than the labour’s use of strike as a counter weapon. There must be a means to counter this. That is only when one can say that there is a contextual bargaining spirit between labour and management.



## A PROPOSITIONAL MODEL OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING WITHOUT COMPROMISE

### MODEL 2



Here both slogans and lost and both arrows intersect. This then is a collective bargaining of true compromise where both parties have what is capable of humiliating the other’s wing.

The latter model is probable not so as found in the labour system today. The mere threat of the state with the counter purse ideology is capable of taming her wings. Besides, it is never also to be forgotten, that even the use of the National Industrial Court as well, is seen under the control of the state. Labour then has no where to pitch her tents. In what follows then, there will be a need for a proposed counter strategy to help check or get back at the state.

### A PROPOSED STRATIGEY FOR COUNTER STATE POLICIES.

Since the trouble with labour unions and the state is that of the larger than life, it will then require , as textised by Marx, a more counter philosophy to help check short-sighted policies; for now, it is never to be forgotten that the state procedural ideology of “no work; no pay” is all a way to get back at labour for any attempt to strike. The scholars, as well, has proposed a number of suggestions to help engage the state as well. One of these entails

1. The polar approach
2. The psycho approach
3. The babel approach

#### 1. POLAR APPROACH

As said earlier, the psychology behind strike, is that of the larger than life, the mightier than pharaoh, the survival of the fittest. The one who sees far and is able to discern the enemy determines the direction others should go. In other winds, since the threat of “no work, no pay” has always been employed to break the camel’s back, it is then in the suggestion of the scholar, that before members embark on any strike, depending on the nature of strike, should inform labour members three months ahead to guide their loins and help prepare themselves. At this juncture, as it were with the Egyptian famine, members are to save in abundance to help keep themselves for the period they will embark on the struggle. This will help strengthen members from being feeble and chicken headed; lest should faint; and by the way, why embark on a struggle if one is not ready to engage the enemy? There should always be a prevailing end.

## 2. PSYCHOL APPROACH

Apart from the need for a long term awareness on the part of labour members financially, for the period they intend to embark on the strike, labour members would have been able to adjust their mind aright and that of family members so that no one yields to the enemy. labour members must see strike as that of war and should be willing to count the cost, save this she cannot prevail on the state. Once again, it is futility to embark on any struggle if we are not willing to count the cost or see victory ahead of us.

**3. THE BABEL APPROACH.** This probably is the most striking weapon that, all things being equal, should be able to humble the state and management. Here labour leaders should have a means of generating internal revenue to be able to take care of hedo needs of member .We do not forget hedo needs being that type of internal industry whose concern is that speculative in cases like war ;for unless labour is richer than the state.

She will always bow out. Labour will need to come to a point where she can, for a year, take care of her hedo needs” while she embarks on her “fixed needs”.

A clarity is to establish as this point. “hedo needs” are such issues as wages and wage determination; payment of salaries etc. These needs are humans and labour combatants need to be belly fed to be able to fight, lest strength should fail them.

“The fixed needs then” are such issues as working conditions, membership appeal and all such that will affect the comfort of the soul. Labour all then need to prepare well enough, before fronting these needs; for since humans can do without them and since comfort is already put in place with stake members, it will then be easy to chase the enemy.

The scholar proposes these approach because of his **SOCIO - INTERVENTION MOODEL** which means that should a crisis in one sector of the economy last long soon, the whole system through internal forces, will crumble ;for other sectors will so join forces unconsciously. And it is only a naked government that will repose for a comfort until that time where crisis in her sphere can no longer be managed. At this point, even the force being the instrument of oppression in hands of the state, will also bow out, leaving then her master helpless. It is then the fear of every state that no crisis in her sphere should get to the point where it can no longer be quenched.

## THE SCHOLAR'S SOCIO INTERVENTION MODEL APPROACH

### Point-D

The state in crisis. It rises to a point where she is fallen at this point the masters in power live their castle and flee away and no one seizes power with the intention to relinquish it

Point- A

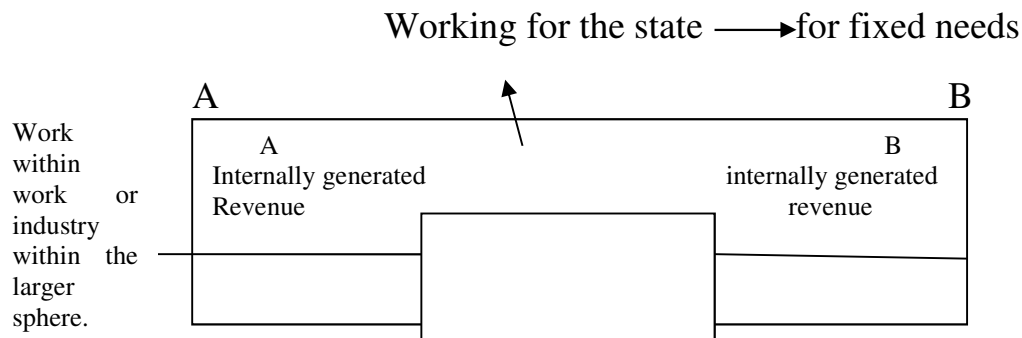
Point-B

Point-C

Internal and unseen forces acting in the state. The state then is fallen

Point  
E

In conclusion on this latter then, labour members must have an over view of practice known as work within work; a sort of industry within the larger sphere. Also here is a proposed draft.



Note: between the poplars of A and B, in the internal industry, the scholar then proposes that labour is capable of sustaining its members if she manages resources generated well; to the point of A – to B within the larger sphere. Hence, at this point is a true compromise attained; no one is larger than the order.

Note: these prepositions are only tasted within the university sphere; I know no other way for now.

### References

1. Fanshoyin, T. (1980) Industrial Relation in Nigeria.

2. Flanders, A (1965) Industrial Relations: what is wrong with the system.
3. Flanders, A. (1970) Trade unions. London; Hutchirison
4. Ginbgiri, A. (2002) , Industrial Relations in Nigeria: issues in contemporary public sector crisis. Port Harcourt.
5. labour Nigerian congress, (NLC) 2008. Policy on collective Bargaining from [www. Nlcna. org /](http://www.Nlcna.org/)
6. Ome – Ege onu, A. (2015) introductions To Industrial Relations in Nigeria, Port Harcourt: Familia Houses publishers. search. Details
7. Lawhead, W. (2002) The Voyage of Discovery. U S A: Word worth