

## **Reconstruction of Labor and Basic Income**

### **: Is Basic Income indispensable for making Precariat as a Class?**

**No-Wan Kwack**(University of Seoul, Basic Income Korean Network)

#### 1. The crisis of labor and precariatization

While the labor movements mainly led by full-time workers have been conservative, precarious workers or precarious proletariats dubbed Precariat (prekäre + Proletariat : Candeias, 2008:125) have been increased. The political divisions and conflicts within the labor movement gradually have been exacerbated in that precarious workers criticize the labor movement led by full-time workers for its deteriorating into the one of the privileged, labor aristocracy. In other words with workers being more precarious, the crisis of labor movement has come to the surface.

In Korea, young people are in despair because they have been highly educated but have not got decent jobs as they expected. With this hopelessness, precarious workers and part-time workers rapidly increased to an extent that there is no precedent cases in the world. In fact life-time jobs had been most guaranteed and the proportion of the full-time workers in employment had been absolutely higher than part-time workers until up to recent last 20 years. But it is the case that the rate of the part-time and precarious workers became the highest in the OECDs. (Standing, 2010: 150) Against this political backgrounds, Korean leftist scholars started to examine the crisis of the labor movement and the possibility of the precariat as a class.

I will explain the causes and the backgrounds of the increase of recent unemployment and of precarious workers. I distinguish between the two as follows. Inevitable technological and scientific developments and irresistible currents of social and historical dimensions seem to be, rather than the cause of, the backgrounds of them. However, the causes of them lie in the capital-friendly flexibility of labor power, commodification, and privatization of neo-liberalism.

Guarantee of full-time workers, collective bargaining, social welfare and social insurance related to wage-labor partially contributed to the de-commodification of labor power in the Fordist institutions of social welfare states. However when they have reached into their limits, neo-liberal regimes instantly kicked off privatizing social welfare and social insurance related to jobs.

It resulted in the increase of unemployment and of precarious workers in the long term. Put it differently, the defeat of leftists and their poverty of political competence connived at this capital and neo-liberal regimes' roll back.

## 2. the concept and genealogy of the precariat

I will shortly explain the notion of 'precariat'. The combined word of precarious with proletariat refers to the instability of labor. For some, the notion of precariat tends to be limited to unstable wage laborers. For others, it is defined as the insecure propertyless. The latter definition of precariat is in line with early Marx's notion of proletariat as the propertyless, i.e., the negation of private property and 'the class of non-class of bourgeois society'. (MEW 1:390: *For the introduction of criticism of Hegel's philosophy of right*) Marx also points out that wage laborers have no choice but to be a member of the propertyless who do not have rights attributed to citizens.

Over the time Marx's notion of proletariat had two biased tendencies as follows. First of all, he states that a majority of petty bourgeois transform themselves into proletariat so that the class of capitalism extremely split into two poles ; one is a handful of bourgeois (land owners) : the other is a massive majority of proletariat. However the petty bourgeois categorized into middle class not only has disappeared into proletariat, but it also has been created from the other classes such as bourgeois, land owners, and proletariat as well. Even it has been rapidly increased at the same rate as the proletariat. As unemployment increases and employment reduces, even the top part of proletariat tends to change their jobs into the self-employed. Moreover the spectrum of the proletariat is inclined to be spread more diversely than Marx imagined and the conflicts within it tend to be intensified, which results from the popularization of university education and the polarization between full-time workers and part-time workers. Thus Marx's hypothesis that the class composition of capitalism would be reduced into two poles, bourgeoisie and proletariat, should be reconstructed.

Secondly, Marx tends to reduce the notion of proletariat into wage-laborer in his later works from *Communist Manifest* to *Capital*. (MEW 4: 468; MEW 23:642) It implies that Marx's hypothesis ignores the differentiations of the proletariat. Now we need to extend the notion of the 'propertyless' to overcome the weakness of Marx's concept of proletariat. There are a group of

people such as youth, college students, soldiers, job seekers, house wives, the retired, and the disabled who are not directly subsumed into the capitalistic mode of production and classified into petty bourgeoisie either. They are not wage-laborers but the propertyless. But the reduction of proletariat into wage-laborers would lessen the room for analyzing them in the framework of class. Regarding this matter, early Marx's viewpoint of the proletariat as the propertyless including wage-laborers is more appropriately suitable than his late one.

Once following early Marx's concept of proletariat as the propertyless, the expropriated deprived of the common wealth created in the nature and socio-history and the exploited by capitalists could be categorized into it. In addition to the exploitation of labor power, capitalists' deprivation of the common wealth is the same kind of it. In so doing the precariat as 'insecure proletariat' can be described as 'insecure propertyless'. In addition the 'precarious' propertyless can be formulated into all people who are exploited and expropriated by the capitalists.

To make matters worse since 1980 neo-liberalistic globalization and the flexibility of labor power have made the bankruptcy of corporations rampant and as well unemployment chronic to a certain degree that even the full-time workers employed by monopoly capital are inclined to be confronted with unemployment. Moreover the neo-liberalistic cut-back of social benefits results in making the subsistence of life insecure in case of unemployment. At last the advance of the period of structural insecurity forces even full-time workers not to be free from being precarious propertyless, that is, precariat which is not a fixed class but becoming one. In conclusion the insecurity of occupation ends up with that of life itself.

However a problem still remains unsolved that the definition of precariat as the 'becoming' class automatically means that it is a class seeking to attain common interests. In order to posit the precariat as a class, the following two matters should be dealt with. First of all we should theoretically explain the precariat's common interests and the possibility and vision of achieving them. Secondly we should practically give an account of the possibility of its being a political alternative force and its viability. When it comes to the first question, the precariat has the common interest that it is supposed to restore and extend the common wealth deprived by capital and the privileged. Therefore it reclaims land and basic income as Standing does. (Standing, 2011:150-182) Beyond Standing's politics of paradise, I suggest that the sphere of the common

wealth should be extended into all kinds of capitalistic exploitations and expropriations so that we can propose the higher basic income and the realization of sharing the common wealth. This maximum extension of the BI and its goal of sharing accords with the general interest of full-time workers and therefore they could be a part of precariat. (Kwack, 2010:171-176)

In conclusion, the precariat has the common interests of the maximum reclamation of the exploitation and expropriation by capital, i.e., the maximum extension of the common wealth including basic income when it has gone through the process of being the precarious propertyless. This is the bottom line of my statement on the precariat. It also has to do with political formation of the precariat as a class. As Candeias much emphasized, the notion of Basic Income would and could contribute to the precariat's discovery of its common interest for itself. It is also a necessary asset to form political subjects and to advance their political social success while transcending wage-labor society. (Candeias, 2008:135)

\* Precariat as a becoming class of various groups who are capitalistically exploited and expropriated.

<b>Definition</b>	<b>Spatial Scope</b>	<b>Time Dimension</b>
A becoming class as the precarious propertyless who are capitalistically exploited and expropriated from common(sharing) goods and resources	All the people including full time wage workers and non-workers except exploiting capitalists and the owner of common wealth for their expropriation	From the contemporary becoming propertyless to the young and future generation deprived of common wealth

### 3. Basic income and the formation of the precariat as a new class

The problematic of precariat from the left doesn't restrict its main task to the transition of the part time workers into the full-time workers, but pursues the facilitation of the self-reliant labor for the emancipation from the capitalistic wage labor as Gorz posited it. (Gorz, 1997) The leftwing basic income is the seed money to liberate the precariat from the capitalistic wage labor.

In order to realize this political goal, it would be better to minimize the taxation of the labor income and reversely to maximize the reclamation of the capitalistic exploitation and expropriation at the sustainable level. In so doing the basic income shall be more politically sustainable as well as economically, because even the full time workers believe that they could earn much more than now and therefore are willingly liable to advocate it.

With the concept of basic income even in favor of the full time workers, it would not limit precariat to part time wage workers but include the full time workers as the category of the propertyless. Besides this, the BI would also create political spheres for a new solidarity among various kinds of the propertyless.

But the concept of precariat has also do to with the dynamic of the precarisation of the whole life. It is said that the full time workers are also a part of precariat in so far as they are likely to be the propertyless and vulnerable to the precariatization in the neo-liberalism. Thus it is much more likely that the solidarity between the full time workers and the other propertyless looms over the horizon of emancipation. In so doing we can correct Standing's overlooking of the possibility of the solid solidarity between the full time wage workers and varied propertyless. Moreover the concept of precariat could enforce solidarity with incoming generations excluded from the common wealth such as resources, estates, decent jobs, and political hopes.

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