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Q7(b)

What is labour commitment? Discuss it with reference to studies of manufacturing industry.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2018 · Sociology GS 1 · 15 marks · Sociological Thinkers: Karl Marx

Sociological Thinkers: Karl Marx - Historical materialism, mode of production, alienation, class struggle; Emile Durkheim - Division of labour, social fact, suicide, religion and society; Max Weber - Social action, ideal types, authority, bureaucracy, protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism; Talcott Parsons - Social system, pattern variables; Robert K. Merton - Latent and manifest functions, conformity and deviance, reference groups; Mead - Self and identity.

Core demand of the question

- What is labour commitment? Discuss it with reference to studies of manufacturing industry
- Keep the answer within a 15-mark length

Revision summary

Labour commitment is stable attachment of time and skill to the workplace.

Kerr's industrialism thesis expected it to grow.

Indian mill and **Breman** studies found circulation and rural-caste ties.

Braverman and **Burawoy** stress control and manufactured consent.

Employers may organise against full commitment.

Introduction

Labour commitment is the extent to which workers stably attach time, skill, and loyalty to an industrial workplace. Early industrial sociology asked why commitment failed in new factories. Later work asked whether management wanted full commitment at all.

Body

The concept

- Commitment includes showing up, learning the job, and accepting industrial time.
- It is social, not a natural work ethic. **Max Weber**'s calling is one cultural source; hunger and contract are others.

Manufacturing studies

- Clark Kerr and colleagues pictured a logic of industrialism that would produce committed labour.
- Indian mill studies, including those around Bombay and Jamshedpur, found rural links, caste recruitment, and circulating labour rather than a full break.
- **Jan Breman's work on south Gujarat showed footloose labour:** management may prefer a non-committed, easily dismissed workforce.

- **Harry Braverman**: deskilling reduces the need for craft commitment and raises the need for control.
- **Michael Burawoy distinguished making out on the shop floor**: consent is produced, not assumed.

Discussion

- High commitment was a Fordist wish in some cores.
- Informalised manufacturing uses contractors precisely to limit commitment on the employer's side.

Flow diagram

Labour commitment -> Stable industrial time
Manufacturing studies -> Caste village contractors
Management -> Sometimes wants non-commitment
Caste village contractors -> Labour commitment

Conclusion

Labour commitment names stable attachment to industrial work. Manufacturing studies show it is produced by culture, wage, and control, and often avoided through circulation and contractors. Indian mills never fully matched the committed industrial-man thesis.

Facts & figures

Kerr et al.

Industrialism and Industrial Man: expected growing labour commitment.

Breman

Footloose labour: weak commitment as a labour regime, not a lag.

Braverman

Deskilling reduces craft commitment and raises managerial control.

Burawoy

Shop-floor consent as organised, not a primordial work ethic.