

Towards Student-Workers Council... (Note: I)

The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the “state of emergency” in which we live is not the exception but the rule. We must attain to a concept of history that is in keeping with this insight. Then we shall clearly realize that it is our task to bring about a real state of emergency, and this will improve our position in the struggle against fascism.

-Walter Benjamin

What is Neo-liberalism? The age in which we are bound to live is the age of Neo-liberalism. What we call Neo-liberalism is the state of emergency normalized. There is no *outside* and there is no *outsider*. Every domain of life has been normalized under Neo-liberal practices and the whole society transformed into factory is in perpetual state of emergency. We are all *inside* of this social factory. We reproduce and produce. The factory runs by plugging our bodies into production machine. Marx had said, “when we consider bourgeois society in the long view and as a whole then the final result of the process of social production always appears as a society itself, i.e, the human being itself in its social relations.” It is in keeping with this insight that today when the students of Jadavpur University declared: *No One is an Outsider*. This is a concrete manifestation of the concrete materiality of the situation.

Our young generation is experiencing the most intensified and rapid changes in history. The narrative of our time is encapsulated in everyone’s experience. This permanent state of emergency is the permanent crisis of capital itself. This dialectical image of our time is embedded in the experience of the working class. Every domain of workplace has been drawn into this state of emergency in the last two decades. Emergency is an inevitable reaction of this frightened and crisis ridden apparatus which has drawn the lines of circuit from factories to campuses, Kashmir to North-East, Vidarbha to Chattisgarh, Muzaffarnagar to Trilokpuri, from Police station to hostel diary entries and so on. The parliamentary image of Narendra Modi is the image of this generalized/normalized permanent state of emergency. Lyngdoh has been recognized by us as the state of campus emergency which is a crackpot of the general state of emergency. The system had already demonstrated that it no longer needed its liberal institutions and their democratic forms. More and more regimentation was unleashed on the student workers involved in the production of knowledge just like that in other sectors of production. Just as Neoliberalism appears out of the deep contradiction of liberalism, Lyngdoh emerges as the outcome of the deep contradiction of the older version of student politics. The very objective of the constitution of Lyngdoh under Birla-Ambani report was self evident: to control the student politics which is roadblock to the neoliberal policies. It’s not by chance that in the name of curbing money-muscle power, Lyngdoh Committee Recommendations cited JNUSU election as a model of student politics!!! Now What? The question is what should be the mode of struggle against Lyngdoh in JNU in particular and neoliberal emergency in general?

What could be the real meaning of Benjamin’s statement “Real Emergency” in material reality of our campus?

There are two modes of struggle against this real state of emergency at the present conjuncture. The first presents the model of struggle for the Liberal Nehruvian socialist reforms. It is often heard that the working class which has achieved their rights after a long struggle in the 1960s and 1970s, the same is being taken away. It is evident from the right to unionize to recent changes in the labour laws. This mode of struggle thinks that, under these conditions, reform is a revolutionary politics. The same mode of politics thinks that the restoration of the old constitution is revolutionary politics under the condition of the imposition of Lyngdoh. Central to this politics of restoration involves a backward-looking-notion of history. While the content of history has moved far ahead, this vision of politics believes that their task of the restoration of the old forms of student politics in particular and working class politics in general is a revolutionary politics. In this mode of struggle, we commit two errors simultaneously. First the working class struggle is ‘fixed’ in the experience of the distant past. Consequently, we fail to develop the progressive essence of the past struggles in the concreteness of our time. Secondly, we fail to understand how capital subsumes these forms of politics for its own development. Capital is a ‘moving contradiction’. Capital is in motion through class struggle. The old forms of struggle sustain capital in a way. This is not a coincidence that new struggles of students and workers are distancing itself from the old forms of trade unions and student politics. Against the politics of reforms, the new struggles of working class are expressing a new ground of politics. Here comes the second mode of struggle.

In the same city of Delhi the struggles of IMT Manesar, Okhla, Wazirpur, 16th December, are suggesting a new ground of struggle and solidarity. The system, while reproducing and producing itself by dividing the working class into different segments/fragments is frightened that these movements in itself is breaking those fragmentation and segmentation. Be it the

segmentation of permanent/contract workers in a factory, male/female workers, student/industrial workers. This is not a forced solidarity. The massive proletarianization and pauperization is experienced by students and the workers alike in this real state of emergency in the form of neo-liberalism. These movements also demonstrate a new general form of student workers solidarity. The regime of representation is in real crisis. The struggle by Jadavpur University students today like the working class struggles of the last decades is a wakeup call that the entire regime of representation is in *real* crisis. Just as the working class movements have distanced themselves from the old trade unions, the student-workers of Jadavpur University and Kolkata by escaping from the old model of students politics and organizations have presented themselves in the movement. This shows the disenchantment of the students from the representative parliamentary system as such. Keeping the second mode of struggle in sight, let us analyze the JNU model of politics against Lyngdoh.

In 2008 when the Supreme Court stayed the JNUSU elections in the guise of Lyngdoh, we decided through a UGBM to restore JNUSU constitution. As a result, right from the beginning we have internalized the logic of the restoration of reformist model, we sought to constrain our vision. It was said that JNU student politics represents a developed model of democracy and Lyngdoh is attacking on the same. That is why we are opposing Lyngdoh in JNU. But, we would demand for elections on the basis of Lyngdoh for struggle in those universities in which there were no elections for democratic representation. In other universities, where elections are held under LCR, for instance University of Delhi, we will fight against Lyngdoh by participating in the elections. So the Joint Struggle committee was constituted in order to fight on two fronts: *Political and Legal*- against Lyngdoh. By political struggle it was meant that JSC will form a platform at the national level which will bring the students and organizations of different universities and campuses on a single platform to fight against Lyngdoh and turning it into a nationwide movement. Through legal struggle JSC will fight the case in Supreme Court for the restoration of the old JNUSU Constitution. After initial hiccups and demonstrations, the whole struggle was turned into just a legal battle! A common platform against Lyngdoh failed miserably. The trajectory of political struggle gradually turned elusive day by day as the court case proceeded. The mere speeding up of legal process was projected as a political battle. Political struggle finally reached its dead end when the whole matter was sent to the Constitutional Bench. It was basically a token commitment to political struggle. Political was turned into Juridical! There was no way out for holding elections as an exercise in self deception. With the acceptance of the soul and form of Lyngdoh, the elections began to be held under some bureaucratic concessions.

The experience of the last elections makes it definitely clear that the onslaught of such state of emergency has rendered such representational bodies dead. Lyngdoh therefore succeeded in its objective. The state of affairs is such that the insights of the so called 'political' organizations could neither understand the real state of student-workers, nor could give the real direction of political struggle in real state of emergency under Lyngdoh. The interesting part of the whole drama just before the previous election exposed the two defeated versions of the same struggle of restoration. The first vision told us that legal struggle is a sham arguing for the direct action to restore the old constitution, while calling the direct restoration as revolutionary. The second version argued that this argument is foolish citing the danger of stay on elections, asking for the roadmap, namely, 'restoration' is feasible only through legal struggle. The legal struggle is the only real struggle against Lyngdoh! These two modes of restoration obscure the ultimate futility of the politics of restoration itself. These are insights of backward-looking political vision. This is a reformist struggle against the state of emergency. What is to be done if not restoration?

As we have mentioned above that the second mode of struggle which is in keeping with the real state of emergency in the context of JNU, we have to strive towards the Student Workers Council or a General Assembly. The question is why do we need an official/governmental union be it old one or its new avatar in the form of Lyngdoh. If we look at the space of JNU campus closely, it can be seen that it is producing and reproducing social relations of capital by perpetuating fragmentation and segmentation among students, teachers, karmacharis and workers and within each fragments themselves. In such real state of emergency the battle cannot be fought under the so called imposed unity in the form of trade unions and student unions. The workers' struggle signifies that in the process of breaking the segmentation the revolutionary direction can be forged. We have to take indispensable steps towards Student-Workers Council or a General Assembly. We have to change the crisis of the relations of capital into the real state of emergency. This is how we can improve our position against administrative control, contractualization, right-wing and the politics of identity. Any struggle in this direction will definitely be a real challenge to Neo-liberal emergency. And in this way we can give a new meaning to Mao's dictum, "Unity in Struggle, Struggle in Unity", not Unity of Struggles!!!

To be continued...

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