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Pol 213 Lecture notes on Political Ideas

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Lecture note 1

Expected Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this topic students are expected to;

1. Understand the meaning of Socialism
2. Know the various types of Socialism
3. Understand the defects of Socialism

Socialism: it's meaning

- Socialism advocate the collective ownership of the resources of a country
- As an economic and political idea it started as a protest movement against the evils of capitalism
- There are a number of defects of capitalism

Defects of capitalism

- Unfair distribution of wealth
- A wage system that lead to unemployment
- A system that makes workers 'wage slave'
- A price system that favours only those who have plenty money
- Employers and workers often have antagonistic relationship

Types of socialist movements

1. Communist movements [Revolutionary]
2. Guild socialists [Evolutionary]

Principles and beliefs of communism

- Materialist interpretation of history. The base of society is founded on economy upon which all other things, politics, philosophy, religion etc are built.
- Theory of surplus value from the proletariat is exploited by the bourgeoisie, giving rise to class struggle.
- Class war exist between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie
- Social revolution will be carried out as the proletariat will fight the bourgeoisie
- Dictatorship of the proletariat will be established after the social revolution.
- The state will wither away since it will not be needed anymore
- A communist society with a philosophy- 'from each according to capacity, to each according to needs'.

Guild socialism

This type of socialism argues that society can achieve its aim by using peaceful means.

Workers can use trade unions to achieve their aim

Trade unions are associations of workers. They normally use strikes and lock outs to achieve their objectives and goals.

Reflections/questions

- What is Socialism?
- Discuss the general principles behind the Communist idea.

Lecture note 2

DEMOCRACY

Expected Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this topic students are expected to;

1. Understand Democracy as a concept
2. Know the features of democracy
3. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of Democracy

The concept of Democracy

- A system of government under which the people exercise the governing power either directly or through representatives periodically elected by themselves (Appadorai, 1975).

- Direct democracy is not common anymore, although referendum is an element present in modern democracies.

- Indirect democracy is now the norm

Attributes or features of Democracy

1. Periodic elections
2. Rule of law
3. Political liberty & economic equality
4. Freedom of speech and association
5. A system of optimal justice

Demerits or weaknesses

- Majority may make wrong choice
- It is capitalistic and exploitative
- Political liberty and economic equality are not attainable
- It wastes public funds and time
- Elections are often not free and fair

Merits and strengths

- Protects citizens interests
- Prevents monopoly of authority
- It promotes equality
- Ensures a stable and responsible administration
- It has an obligation towards citizens
- It enhances political education
- It promotes peaceful change in government

Reflections/questions

Explain the meaning of Democracy, outlining its strengths.

Critically assess the statement that 'Democracy is the best form of government'.

