

Raising Political Awareness for Workers in Vietnam: Some Issues Posed

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ABSTRACT

Although the Communist Party of Vietnam has always determined that building a strong Vietnamese working class is a very important task in the process of national industrialization and modernization, at present, the level of political awareness, legal awareness, labor discipline, and industrial manners of the Vietnamese working class is not commensurate with the requirements of the development level of the economy, technology, and globalization. In light of this reality, the article will examine the viewpoint of the Communist Party of Vietnam on the issue of building the working class, the necessity of raising political awareness of the working class, and some solutions to raise political awareness for the working class in non-state businesses.

Keywords: Communist Party of Vietnam, non-state businesses, political awareness, working class.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Workers are a class with an important position in Vietnamese history. They have the mission of leading the Vietnamese revolution and contributing to its victory. Vietnamese history has affirmed the role of the working class. President Ho Chi Minh once affirmed: “*The Party is the vanguard of the proletariat, must win the majority of its class, must empower its class to lead the masses*” (Ho, 2011a, p. 145). In times of peace, the working class continues to promote its role as the leading class in Vietnam’s political and social life. The working class continues to play a leading role in the Communist Party of Vietnam. The working class participates and leads economic life in Vietnam. The 12th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam confirmed: “*Pay attention to education, training, fostering and development of the working class in both quantity and quality; improve political courage, educational and professional qualifications, vocational skills, industrial manners, labor discipline of workers... to protect the benefits and improve the material and spiritual life of workers*” (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2016, p. 160). To carry out their mission, the working class is constantly increasing in number and improving their qualifications. By 2021, our country’s labor force aged 15 and over was estimated to be 50.6 million people (GSO, 2021). The workforce engaged in economic sectors reached 49.1 million people. The proportion of trained workers aged 15 and over with degrees and certificates reached 26.1%. Of the trained workers, university level or higher accounted for 11.7%, college level accounted for 3.6%, intermediate level accounted for 4.1%, and elementary level accounted for 6.8%. This workforce plays a significant role in the cause of industrialization, modernization, and international integration of our country.

The working class is an important force, as described above. However, in reality, their political level is still limited. At the same time, the Party and government of Vietnam are extremely concerned about this issue. Therefore, researching the bases to raise their political awareness as well as proposing solutions to raise political awareness is extremely necessary.



2. METHOD

Research on political consciousness and raising the political consciousness of the working class is a subject of political science. Therefore, to shed light on this topic, the article will use logical methods, historical methods of the history major, and methods of the political science major. These methods are used to show the basis for raising the political consciousness of workers. At the same time, the methods also point out the scientific basis for proposing solutions to respond appropriately to the working class as well as the Vietnamese social reality.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. *The Necessity of Raising Political Awareness of the Working Class Today*

Currently, in our country, the political awareness of the working class can be expressed with five factors: Class enlightenment, awareness of workers of organizations in the political system, the attitude of workers towards the cause of national renewal, awareness of workers of their political needs and interests, and the attitude of workers towards allies and employers.

3.1.1. *Class Enlightenment*

Class enlightenment refers to the awareness that makes the working class from a “by itself” class to a “for itself” class. This enlightenment is obtained through an understanding of Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh’s thought, the Party’s guidelines and lines, especially the theory of the working class itself (its historical mission, why that mission exists, and conditions required to fulfill that mission).

3.1.2. *Awareness of the Workers of Organizations in the Political System*

The awareness of workers of organizations in the political system is the understanding (its position, importance, and functions) and attitudes towards the Party, state organizations, and socio-political organizations, especially towards Party organizations and trade unions.

3.1.3. *Attitudes of the Workers towards the Cause of National Renewal*

This refers to the belief in the victory of the cause of renewal, a keen interest in understanding the major components of the latest renewal path, especially policies directly related to workers and industry, and effort contribution to this cause.

3.1.4. *Awareness of the Workers of their Political Needs and Interests*

As citizens, workers must be aware of their political interests and needs. They must understand and observe the fundamental rights and obligations (primarily enshrined in the Constitution). As a worker, they must understand and comply with specific rights and obligations in industries, units, and businesses and practice the grassroots democracy regulations.

3.1.5. *Attitudes of the Workers towards Allies and Employers*

It is the first realization of the importance and enforcement of alliances with peasants and intellectuals; the spirit of cooperation with employers to promote production for the benefit of both parties and society, at the same time, know to engage in sensible and reasonable struggles under the legal provisions to protect their legitimate rights and interests, dignity.

The above-mentioned fundamental issues of political awareness manifestation of the working class are closely related, motivating and influencing each other, of which class enlightenment is the most dominant manifestation. From the totality of these manifestations, it is possible to recognize the political awareness of workers in reality and understand the importance of political awareness for the position and role of workers in our country today.

3.2. *The Necessity of Raising Political Awareness for Workers in Non-State Businesses*

According to the White Book on Vietnamese Businesses 2021, issued by the Ministry of Planning and Investment, Non-state businesses (NSBs) have the highest scale and proportion among all businesses in most indicators: “NSBs have continuously developed, from accounting for only a low proportion to now having the highest scale and proportion among all businesses in most indicators” (p. 271). By the end of 2019, the whole country had 669,519 businesses operating effectively, of which the vast majority were non-state businesses, including foreign-invested businesses (FDI). Among active businesses with production and business effectiveness, the non-state economic sector consisted of 666,396 businesses (accounting for 99.5%), employing the largest workforce of 14.04 million individuals (accounting for 88.8%).

With the above number and scale, raising the political awareness of workers in NSBs is an inevitable requirement, stemming from the following grounds:

Firstly, our country's working class emerged and developed from a backward agricultural country. In the development process, the working class receives new workers, mostly young farmers with limited occupational experience, so the class awareness and stance are still constrained. As a result, "Our country's workers are unequal in social awareness, class enlightenment, political courage, sense of organization and labor discipline." In addition, due to the influence of individualism combined with the impact of adverse conditions brought about by the market economy as well as many foreign cultural waves, a part of workers adopted negative, opportunistic, passive, undisciplined lifestyles, leading to the fading of ideals, emphasizing material benefits and enjoyment while disregarding moral lifestyles and spiritual values, thereby falling into social evils, moral and lifestyle degradation. Additionally, some are skeptical and distrustful of the Party's lines and guidelines, thereby losing faith in the path toward socialism.

Secondly, after many years of renewal, despite Vietnam's significant achievements, risks such as corruption, waste, and "peaceful evolution" are still complicated, especially the combination of new tricks, especially exploiting the Internet to spread information causing "self-evolution," "self-transformation" within the people, including the working class. This contributes to a decline in trust in the Party and the socialist regime. Therefore, more than ever, it is necessary to raise political awareness for our people in general, including the working class, of which workers in NSBs take up the majority.

Thirdly, following the spirit of the Party's 7th Central Committee Resolution, we are entering a "generational transition period" from the generation of leaders who grew up and were nurtured during wartime to the generation maturing in peacetime and if "ensuring a continuous and robust transition between generations" will fortify the leadership of the country, maintaining the socialist direction firmly (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2008, p. 30). This transition encompasses leadership and the generational shift of all Vietnamese, including the working class. For a seamless and stable transition, the younger generation must be educated and instilled with the values of their predecessors, primarily a love for the country, labor, and socialism, fostering a correct, clear, and steadfast political awareness.

Fourthly, raising political awareness for the working class is urgent, especially among workers in NSBs, because of the situation and characteristics of the environments of these businesses. The environment in which the relationship between the employees and the employers is that of the employer-worker relationship leads to complexities in labor relations. Also, at present, many businesses do not have organizations for the working class (Party, Trade Union) or are not operating effectively. Raising political awareness for workers in NSBs will contribute to building a stable and harmonious relationship between employees and employers, boosting production for the benefit of both parties and society.

Fifthly, at present, in our country, there are many deviations in the perception and assessment of the working class and its role and mission: The recognition of the working class in Vietnam is only seen through individual workers in the socialist society under the leadership of the Communist Party, the working class and working people become the primary owners of the production materials of society. The socio-political status of the working class has changed fundamentally:

"Under socialism, the working class can no longer be called the proletariat: it is free from exploitation, and together with the whole people, it holds the production materials. Therefore, its labor power is not a commodity." (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2018, pp. 54–57).

3.3. Some Solutions to Raise Political Awareness for Workers in Non-State Businesses

In order for the objective of raising political awareness for the working class in non-state businesses to be effectively implemented, it is necessary to actively implement a number of synchronous and focused solutions, specifically as follows.

3.3.1. Ensuring the Legal and Legitimate Rights and Interests of Workers

Firstly, proactively supplement, improve, and seriously implement policies and laws to ensure the legal and legitimate rights and interests of workers. When writing about the history of human existence and development, the classic theorist Karl Marx said: "Men can only make history when they can survive. But to survive, they need food, drink, housing, clothing, and a few other things" (Marx & Engels, 1995, p. 284). In order to work and develop, men need to have their minimum basic needs met.

When facing difficulties in material and spiritual life, the problem facing the working class in our country today is to find ways to ensure fundamental living conditions. In the face of the current trend of globalization and the promotion of international integration, the need to pay attention to lives and protect the legitimate rights and interests of the working class and workers is identified as a prerequisite. This requirement is reflected in ensuring jobs, increases in incomes, improved working conditions and environment, and paying more attention to housing needs and welfare works for workers. The

documents of the 13th Party Congress identified: “Take care of the material and spiritual life, housing and social welfare of workers; protect the legitimate rights and interests of workers” (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2021, p. 176). This is the consistent policy of the Party to create material and spiritual motivation for workers and the working class to develop and promote their role in the cause of national construction and development.

Implementing the spirit of the Party’s 13th National Congress involves amending and supplementing policies and laws on salary issues and social regimes for workers seriously, openly, and transparently, with inspection and supervision as well as clear mechanisms to protect interests, improve the material and spiritual life of the working class.

3.3.2. *Renovating the Contents and Methods of Political and Ideological Education for Workers*

To renovate contents, forms, and methods of political and ideological education for the working class in a proactive manner and open trend with the principle of diversity, flexibility, and adaptability combined with rich and attractive forms. Therefore, the requirement for political propaganda and education officers is to proactively research, search, and select forms of political education to suit the specific characteristics of subjects in each business type. Propaganda and political and ideological education for workers need to be organized regularly, persistently, and closely following practical requirements. In addition, it is necessary to integrate propaganda, education, and mobilization with material and spiritual encouragement for the working class.

3.3.3. *Promoting the Role of Trade Unions and Other Representative Organizations in Businesses*

This solution aims to care for and protect the legitimate rights and interests of workers. The issue of caring for and protecting the rights and interests of workers is the main function of trade unions. When writing about the mission of trade union organizations, President Ho Chi Minh pointed out that “trade union was established with the primary purpose of gradually improving the lives of workers, enhancing the material and cultural life of the working class in particular and of the people in general” (Ho, 2011b, p. 326). He also regularly reminded trade union officials, within their capabilities, to strive to enhance the material life, cultural, and technical levels and pay attention to protecting occupational health and safety and hygiene for workers. Accordingly, it is necessary to:

“Renovate the organization and operation of trade unions in accordance with the labor structure, the needs and aspirations of workers, and the requirements of international integration. Focus on performing the role of representing and protecting the legitimate rights and interests of workers and collectives of workers well. Orient and manage well the establishment and operation of labor organizations at non-unionized businesses today.” (Ho, 2011b, p. 258).

Trade union activities and other representative organizations in businesses should actively coordinate and effectively support propaganda and education of workers to raise class enlightenment and political courage.

3.3.4. *Reforming the Organization and Leadership Methods of the Grassroots Party Organization in Businesses*

Grassroots Party organizations need to carry out a comprehensive reform of leadership methods, focusing on the objective of raising awareness among party members and officials at all levels and branches about the position and importance of the Party grassroots organization to ensure a comprehensive leadership role in NSBs. They study, complete, and supplement the system of specific regulations and sanctions in the laws so that the establishment and operation of Party organizations at businesses are seriously and effectively implemented. In addition, they focus on promoting propaganda, advocacy, and persuasion for business owners to be able to share, accompany, and create favorable conditions for the smooth and effective establishment and operation of grassroots party organizations. They encourage and facilitate workers to participate in mass activities, discover, foster, and admit into the Party the elite masses. They proactively expand grassroots democracy in Party activities, actively create, innovate, and improve the quality of Party cell activities in businesses to improve the quality of Party activities. They comprehensively and effectively promote the roles and responsibilities of Party members in business organizations.

The issue of renewing the Party’s leadership over socio-political organizations in businesses mentioned here is carried out in state-owned businesses and equitized businesses. In fact, in the process of implementing the transformation, the Party’s leadership method for businesses, as well as for socio-political organizations in businesses, is still confused, showing many shortcomings. This is evidence of the blurred role and position of the Party within businesses, especially those that have undergone privatization. Most political-social organizations within many businesses are almost inert in

their direction, either non-operational or merely symbolic in their activities. Effectively implementing the fundamental solutions mentioned will significantly contribute to further enhancing the political awareness of workers and employees.

4. CONCLUSION

In the context that Vietnam is promoting the cause of industrialization, modernization, and deep international integration, raising political awareness of the working class in general and of workers in NSBs in particular is pivotal. Simultaneously, enhancing the political awareness of society aims to ensure that workers comprehend their position and roles better; on the other hand, it seeks to provide a more accurate and comprehensive understanding for our people about the position and role of the Vietnamese working class—a class with a great historical mission to lead the revolution through the vanguard of the Communist Party of Vietnam. It represents advanced production methods, pioneers the construction of socialism, takes the lead in the cause of industrialization and modernization, and serves as the core force in the alliance of the working class with the peasantry and Vietnamese intelligentsia. As affirmed in the 12th Party Congress, it's essential to “strengthen the national great unity block on the basis of the alliance of working class with the peasantry and the intelligentsia led by the Party” so that this force really becomes the foundation of the national great unity block for the objective of “rich people, strong country, democracy, justice and civilization,” an indispensable requirement today.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they do not have any conflict of interest.

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