Work and Leisure Policy for Korean Workers

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Contemporary Condition of Workers in Korea

According to a number of news articles and other sources, the conditions of Korean workers can be briefly summarised by highlighting three issues; namely, reduced legal working hours, the problems of irregular workers, and working conditions and the labour unions. The first issue is the '40 Hour Work Week' which is often called the 'Five Day Work Week'. This system was argued over for about five years: the debate was about reducing working time from 44 to 40 hours, and finally this was passed into law in the National Assembly in August 2003. It is being enforced in six phases (Kim, S. T. and Kim, W. S., 2004:38):

> PHASE 1, government, financial and insurance agencies, and workplaces with more than 1,000 employees in July 2004
>
> PHASE 2, workplaces with over 300 employees in July 2005
>
> PHASE 3, workplaces with over 100 employees in July 2006
>
> PHASE 4, workplaces with over 50 employees in July 2007
>
> PHASE 5, workplaces with over 20 employees in July 2008
>
> PHASE 6, workplaces with less than 20 employees will be included on a day to be determined by Presidential decree which will be no later than 2011.

It was expected that this system would have a number of effects such as improved life quality (because of increased leisure time), developing a family centred culture, solving the problem of unemployment (sharing and creating new job opportunities), adjusting working time to the international standard, developing the competitive power of companies in world markets, increased domestic demand focused on service industries such as culture, tourism, leisure, transportation and so on, developing human

resources, expanding women's social involvement and so forth (Kim, S. T. and Kim, W. S., 2004: 47-74). During the progress of PHASE 4, several results related to the '40 Hour Work Week' became ongoing issues in a number of newspapers. Firstly, expenditure on overseas travel increased. According to the Bank of Korea, foreign expenditure for overseas travel was about 4.2 billon dollars from January to April 2006, that is, an average of 1.5 billion dollars a month (in 2005 the average expenditure per month was just 995 million dollars). Although several reasons for this increase in expenditure can be indicated, the '5 Day Work Week' is recognised as one of them (Mae-il-kyung-jae, 2006). Secondly, the number of people who have more than one job has increased. Some create their own companies where they work only at weekends (TV report, 2006), and others have a part-time job at the weekend (Newsmaker, 2007). Thus some people who have gained spare time at weekend under the 'new system' seem to seek another job in their spare time. Third, consumption of leisure products has increased. This includes the number of people who enjoy many kinds of sports such as jogging, marathon, MTB and cycling. They buy not only expensive sport products but also more expensive hi-technology products related to these sports. For example, 'Nike+' which measures distance, speed and the quantity of motion is produced by Nike and Apple. 'Project Fusion' measures heartbeat as well as speed and distance of motion and is offered by Adidas along with Polar Electro. Economists say that these products have high potential for further growth in sales, and also that this is one of the effects of the 'Five Day Work Week'. In fact it may be revealed later on that people have become more interested in sport itself, and that this is why demand for the products has increased (DigitalTimes, 2007). In short, it is assumed that the more non-working hours are increased by reducing working time, the more will people spend their money to buy products from the commercial leisure sector or look for other jobs.

Another issue is a problem of irregular workers, especially concerning the 'Act on the Protection, etc. of Fixed-term and Part-time Employees [Bee-chung-gyu-zik-guel-ro-za-bo-ho-bup]'. This Act is intended to protect irregular workers who have worked for an employer for more than two years: they must be made regular workers. Even though this law intends to protect them, it has been found that in practice the law is promoting their dismissal. For example, an E-Land strike took place in July 2007. E-Land has become well-known in Korea as a Christian and ethical company because of its contributions to public social welfare. The reason why the strike occurred was that the company discharged 500 irregular workers

because the company did not want them to be transferred to the regular payroll as required by the new act. In fact E-Land is quite a big company, and more than 10 fashion brands which include 'Teenieweenie' and 'Whoau', and several imported brands with rights of exclusive sale in Korea such as Puma, belong to E-Land. Moreover Carrefour Korea (the famous hypermarket based in France) was recently merged with E-Land and the name was changed to 'Homever'. The workers who were recently fired by E-Land used to work at the cash desks in 'Homever'. Similar cases to E-land include 'Korail (Korea Railroad)' and 'Koscom' (which was founded by the Ministry of Finance and the Korea Stock Exchange to computerise the securities markets and related industry systems). The former discriminates between irregular and regular workers in piece rate payment and has transferred 200 irregular train crews to outsourcing at the same time as the introduction of the Act. The latter company unilaterally terminated an employment contract before the enforcement of the Act, and was then charged with low-wage sweated labour, discriminatory working circumstances and illegal treatment of irregular workers.

The Act which came into effect on July 1st in 2007 aims at "promoting a sound development of the labour market by redressing undue discrimination against fixed-term and part-time employees and strengthening the protection of their working conditions" (Kook-chung Briefing, 2007). As a matter of fact, the labour market in Korea now can be largely divided into two parts, regular workers and irregular workers, and the irregular workers can be split into 'fixed-term employees' and 'part-time employees'. The first term refers "to an employee who has signed a labour contract whose period is fixed (hereafter referred to as a 'fixed term labour contract')". The latter refers to "a part-time employee as defined in Article 2 of the Labour Standards Act" (Kook-chung Briefing, 2007), namely, "an employee who has shorter working time than a general employee's fixed working time for a week" (Chapter I, Article II of the Labour Standards Act, 2007). According to a report of the Korean National Statistics Office (KNSO), in March 2007 the number of irregular workers was about 5.8 million, about 36.7% of total paid workers in Korea (KNSO, 2007). In comparison, in the statistics in August 2006 it was 36.6%, about 5.5 million people. There had been a rise of approximately 0.1 percent by March 2007 (The Korea Herald, 2007).

Two issues, as mentioned previously, seem to be related to each other because the irregular worker problem was already an expected result before the introduction of the 'Five Day Work Week' (Kim, S. T. and Kim,

W. S., 2004:43). Accordingly, a trial to solve this problem, which is a negative effect of reducing working hours, began with the 'new system', and the Act to preserve irregular workers' rights was an outcome. Although this Act seems to be blamed now because of having a reverse effect (i.e. it forces them to become unemployed), it must be stressed that the concept (definition) of 'irregular worker' was determined by law, and criteria to describe the workers was already in operation.

The final issue is about the working environment and trade unions. Recently two corporations (Hankook Tyre and Samsung Semiconductor) have been identified as representative companies with serious industrial accidents. It is regarded as a problem that their ways of managing are not ethical, even though both are known as global companies. In the case of Hankook Tyre, from May 2006 to September 2007, 13 workers who used to work in factories and a laboratory died of acute cardiac infarction, heart attack, coronary arteriosclerosis and so on. While the management insists that there were no problems in the working conditions, the bereaved families are outraged by the company's behaviour and the absence of a sincere apology. In Samsung Semiconductor, it is now confirmed that at least 12 workers have died or have been struggling against leukaemia. Furthermore, people in Korea seem to be disappointed by the behaviour of managements which are very similar to Hankook Tyre, including management denials that there are serious problems in the workplace, or threatening the families of deceased ex-workers with the social power of Samsung (Financial News, 2008; Pressian, 2008). Although these two companies operate on a global scale, the cases raise doubts as to whether their welfare systems for workers meet global standards.

Research Questions and Aims

These issues in Korea are addressed in a variety of questions in this research. Related to the first issue, the policy to reduce working time can be represented as reflecting increasing leisure demands by the workers. To satisfy their actual demands what kind of supports should be provided? What are their actual demands for leisure? What is the meaning of an unfamiliar term, 'leisure policy'? The second issue can lead to questions about the characteristics of the labour market in Korea. Are the changes in the Korean labour market a global thing or a particularity of Korea? Why has the labour market changed? Who are the 'Korean workers' who belong to the labour market? How have they developed historically as a class? The third issue seems to be more related to the second issue. Have

their working conditions, including labour-management relations, been improved? What should be provided further for them? What are the welfare systems provided by companies? What is industrial recreation? Does industrial recreation have any potential as a leisure policy in Korea? Could it be introduced in contemporary Korean society? Based on these ideas the research questions can be summarised as follows:

First, the characteristics of Korean workers and the labour market will be investigated.

Second, the concept of leisure policy and the potential of industrial recreation as a leisure policy will be explored.

Third, actual demands of Korean workers for leisure and the relationship between their demands for leisure and their work situations will be studied.

Accordingly this research aims at proposing an appropriate leisure policy for Korean workers through answering these research questions.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter sketches the background to the original research in this study. It compares industrialisation in Britain and Korea, separated temporally by over a century, noting similarities and differences, especially in the kinds of working class that were brought into being. The chapter then reviews mainly western theories about work-leisure relationships, and then describes how leisure has developed in Korea in recent decades. Finally the chapter looks at developments in leisure policies in Britain, so that the thesis can assess whether these are suitable templates for Korea.

The Workers

The several issues need to be addressed about the term 'workers'. These issues concern the term's general meaning, its particular characteristics, and so forth. It can be a somewhat hasty generalisation to say that the workers can be defined unambiguously as a mix of regular and irregular workers based only on the matters mentioned previously.

To understand the general meaning of 'workers', linguistic differences between English and Korean as well as the lexical meanings should be considered. In the Oxford Dictionary, 'worker' has three meanings (in fact originally there were four meanings but the final meaning which refers to a female bee is now excluded) as follows: 'a person who works, especially one who does a particular kind of work', 'a person who is employed to do physical work rather than organizing things or managing people', and 'a person who works hard or who works in a particular way'. In a thesaurus, worker has a variety of linked terms such as employee, hand, working man, labourer, and so on. In Korean two terms seem to be similar to 'worker': 'No-dong-za' and 'Guel-ro-za'. According to Yonsei Korean Dictionary, the former refers to a person who makes money by physical work and the latter is defined as a person who works for wages. Whilst the former tends to be used as a concept opposite to 'capitalist' and utilised in sociology journals, labour movement societies and labourer-oriented news journals,

the latter is preferred by the government, general newspapers and the Act (e.g. Act on the Protection, etc. of Fixed-term and Part-time Employees [Bee-chung-gyu-zik-guel-ro-za-bo-ho-bup]). Thus it can be concluded strictly that 'No-dong-za' is more like the second meaning of the English 'worker' and 'Guel-ro-za' is closer to 'employee'. However these two terms seem to be used inter-changeably in English.

To understand the characteristics of Korean workers in depth, it seems necessary to start exploring the general meaning of 'worker' in the West, for the concept of 'worker' has been first constructed there, as well as investigating the formation of the working class historically. In terms of the process of working class formation, generally it is recognised that the working class has been built since industrialisation, that is, in the 19th century. Moreover it seems to be essential for working class formation, particularly in Britain, to be investigated, for Britain was the first industrialised country in the world. Thus it can be said that Britain's 'original working class' was 'the world's first industrial working class' (Roberts, 2001:81). Conditions before and immediately after the Industrial Revolution can be described as centralisation of the population in cities and towns, which were rapidly expanded, and these people were merged into city workforces in factories, mines and docks, and emerged from dire poverty in rural areas (Roberts, 2001). In Thompson's book, known as the classic on English working class history, the period of working class formation is represented similarly. In other words, not only the process with a number of labour movements but also the social context of class formation including poor working conditions is described, especially from the 1790s to the 1830s (Thompson, 1991).

English workers

Thompson's book consists of three parts: the liberty tree, the curse of Adam, the working-class presence. In the first part, the social context of working class formation is presented.

To begin, the London Corresponding Society (LCS), which was one of the key organisations in the process of working class formation, is introduced. Religious dissent also seems to have played an important role in working class formation. In particular, dissenters' struggles for civil and religious liberties are described, focusing on where the poor were accepted among the dissenters. In fact, Methodism seems to have targeted and/or to have been chosen by the poor. The influence of Methodism on the working

class extends beyond its religious teachings which a number of authors have identified, and includes implicit critiques in terms of its heterogeneous democratic tendencies and its social role as a model for other organisations. The French Revolution also seems to have strongly influenced working class formation in England because of its effects on the consciousness of the working class. Accordingly, the upper class tended to fear taverns, fairs and big congregations of people and, strangely, the Methodists as the religion of poor people. Jacobins had similar attitudes towards the poor, namely the working class, through their criticisms against intemperance, ignorance and dissoluteness.

The Englishman's 'birthright' related to the bourgeoisie's property and the phenomena of mobs and riots were regarded as sub-political traditions in the early working class movements. Particularly, capital punishment for crimes against property was enacted and moreover, the form of the mob and riot in the eighteenth century could be classified into voluntary popular direct action and intentional use of the crowd as a tool of pressure. However 'mobs' for a political purpose have not been employed since the 19th century, but at that time reformers were not afraid of mobs, and the government had to prepare itself to face the 'revolutionary crowd'. Indeed, anxiety about the increasing power of centralised authority seems to have been widespread, especially among 'Tories' who wanted to preserve local autonomy, 'Whigs' feared the enlargement of the monarch's and government's power, and a 'radical populace' which led to popular resistance.

Among key writings affecting the process of working class formation, Thomas Paine's 'Rights of Man' is regarded as a foundation text of the English working-class movements. In fact his criticisms against current constitutionalism based on English law, and a hereditary system to support upper class power including that of the King, seemed to strongly influence the movements. For several reasons he was evaluated as an important person in the history of working class formation. First he built up 'a new framework' of radicalism for the next 10 decades. This framework was based on 'contempt for monarchical and hereditary principles'. Second, he provided a bridge between the Whigs and the radicalism that was the beginning toward the social legislation of the twentieth century. His effect on the history of the working class movement can also be seen in the disturbances of the 1790s, especially from 1792 to 1796. Although it can be generally recognised that constitutionalism began with the French Revolution of 1789, in England its beginning was associated with Tom

Paine's work. Of course, the influence of the French Revolution and several other events in France on English movements cannot be ignored. However, most movements of the 1790s were only for English democracy and were not related to France. Moreover, these have been evaluated as an opportunity to transform people's sub-political attitudes and class arrangements, and were the beginning of a tradition of the movements which lasted over the next centuries.

The second part of Thompson's work is about the environments surrounding workers. The emergence of factories for manufacturing by an industrial working population was regarded as new. As Engels mentioned in his book of 1892, the first proletarians were based in manufacturing, namely factory hands, and in particular it was recognised that the cotton mill produced both goods and the 'labour movement' itself. In other words, it can be said that the cotton mill stood in the centre of the industrial revolution, along with steam power. However there were several considerations connected to cotton mills. First, the number of workers who were employed in the cotton industry was a minority of all workers. Thus cotton mill workers cannot be seen as typical or average working men. Second, both the political and cultural traditions of the working class community can be underestimated because of the emphasis on the newness of cotton mill workers. Several examples can explain how far workers from other industries have contributed to labour movements, such as the Jacobins, artisans, Luddites, skilled men in small workshops, Chartists, outworkers and so on.

The working class should be conceptualised now. In the words of Francis Place, the working class could be classified into 'skilled and prudent' workmen, and 'ignorant and imprudent labourers or paupers'. This working class had been formed from the 1790s to the 1830s and in two growths its formation can be observed: 'class-consciousness' and 'corresponding forms of political and industrial organisation'. Hence working class formation can be described as a political and cultural as well as an economic fact, and it cannot be regarded as 'the spontaneous generation of the factory system'. In particular, the influence of the political context on the formation of working class consciousness and institutions needs to be stressed. The appearance of the Combination Act is recognised as a representative result of an alliance between the aristocracy and manufacturers against working people, because it fulfilled purposes of both sides, namely the aristocracy's aim to suppress Jacobinism, and the manufacturers' aim to overwhelm movements for increased wages. Indeed

social conditions at the time of the French Revolution, an increase in population and the Industrial Revolution led to the repression of working people. Not only the political and social contexts but also economic extortion made for discrimination against working people. In fact, exploitation seemed to exist in most industries, and socio-cultural associations of working people arose out of these processes. In other words, they suffered from political suppression and economic extortion, and the poor social conditions surrounding them, and conflicts between employers and workers were enlarged. Their desire for freedom was also inspired by these processes. Thus the reason why the working class was formed at this time can be attributed to the political and social contexts, and to economic exploitation as mentioned previously.

Living conditions of workers in this period can be assessed by four criteria: diet, housing, life expectancy and children. In terms of people's diets, first, the price of bread (and of oatmeal) was the first index used to estimate their living standard and accordingly the reason why people were strongly opposed to the Corn Laws of 1815. The problem of the high malt tax surrounding beer was regarded seriously by a number of workers as a cultural as well as a dietary matter because beer was an essential drink for workers to compensate for heavy labour. In addition to bread and beer, meat, potato, sugar and tea were regarded as essentials. Economic conditions in the Industrial Revolution led to living conditions of working people that were around the subsistence level. The fact that their living conditions were poor can be seen in several ways. There were a number of problems in their houses related to water supply, sanitation, over-crowding and the use of the home as a workplace, and these problems were most serious in large cities. The problems of health and life can be related to the previous conditions. Infant mortality was higher in cities than in rural areas, and a number of diseases occurred due to bad conditions in both homes and workplaces, and poor diets. Intensification of child labour seemed to be created by two trends: first specialisation, differentiation of economic roles and a collapse of the family economy. Second, there was a breakdown of humanitarianism. While child labour existed in agriculture and the industrial economy before 1780, it was within a family economy and under parental care. However, child labour in the factory system was cruel and exploitative. In other words, it was not the child's condition but machinery's which governed the environment, discipline, speed, and working hours. The breakdown of humanitarianism toward child labour was linked to the interests of both the child's parents and the factory employer because the parents needed the child's earning power and

employers regarded the child labourer as a 'busy', 'industrious' and 'useful' tool.

In terms of the worker's life and community in the period of the Industrial Revolution, Methodism combined with utilitarianism to create a dominant ideology. Workers' amusements were the subject of preaching and legislation promoted by Methodist institutions such as the Society for the Suppression of Vice. Their prescribed way of life included the separation of work and leisure hours, or working day and Sabbath, and criticism of Saint Monday, traditional holidays and fairs. In fact the fairs in the eighteenth century were economically and culturally important for the poor because not only were these events local traditions but also led to the growth of provincial pride and consciousnesses. Thus a typical English working man was transformed by Puritan teachings to become more disciplined, reserved and methodical, and less violent and spontaneous. Nevertheless, working class community institutions such as friendly societies are to be explained not by Methodism but as conscious working class efforts. The members of friendly societies consisted of artisans who were the majority, clerks, small tradesmen, only a few of higher social status, and almost no middle class members. They were stable in members who actively took part in self-government. Moreover, friendly societies had a propensity for unification, and promoted regional and national trade union federations. As a result, an independent working class culture and institutions, and a working class consciousness, developed in these societies, and by this point the mob of the eighteenth century could be differentiated from the working class of the nineteenth century.

This section offers descriptions of key events and ideas, which have been mentioned briefly already, in the process of working class formation. First of all, it seems that popular radicalism at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century was weakened, then revived during the dissolution of earlier associations, the suspension of Habeas Corpus, and the war between Britain and France. Two radical politicians emerged at Westminster, namely Burdett and Cochrane, and afterwards radicalism was never lost. A 'Westminster Committee' remained a reforming organisation for a few years, and it created key people in the history of radicalism such as Burdett, Cartwright, Cobbett, Hunt, Place and so on. Nevertheless, it should not be thought that this Committee inspired working class movements. It seems to be agreed that it provided a new example of 'electoral organisation' depending not on a candidate's wealth or influence but on his voluntary effort. However, there was a definite

limit to the choice of candidates such as the 'necessary property-qualification', and there was only one MP who was supported by the Committee, namely Burdett. Anti-Jacobinism continuously suppressed radicalism, and the radicals did not have any organisations or consistent policy during the 19th century. Thus, due to their victories at Westminster, radical movements in other areas were oppressed further by the Church and magistrates, and the radicalism of the midlands and north industrial areas was expressed in 'illegal trade unions', that is, combinations with 'industrial grievances', 'the secrete meeting' and 'the oath'.

At the beginning of 19th century several events led to the development of workers' collective consciousness. First, Edward Marcus Despard was sentenced to death because he was suspected of an attempted coup d'état. This event justified the government's policy of suppressing popular agitation and liberties through measures such as the Seditious Meetings Act and the suspension of Habeas Corpus. It did not seem to matter whether Despard was innocent or not. Rather, his behaviour to protect his society impressed a number of workers, poor people and their movements. Second, the Luddites as a violent industrial movement verified the re-emergence of radical reformers. At that time the employment of spies was advocated, and as a matter of fact their activities in the history of English Jacobinism and popular radicalism were remarkable. However, the deep and strong working-class culture of the Luddites protected them against these spies. Third, the Combination Acts to restrain Jacobinism and radicalism resulted in a coalition between the Jacobin tradition and trade unions, which maintained both political and industrial characteristics. Thus these Acts did not seem to be effective in obstructing the growth of trade unionism or the violence of the Luddites.

Radicalism became more popular after the war with France and was recognised in 'generalised libertarian rhetoric'. In London it developed more consciously and into more organised and sophisticated forms. In the Midlands and the north, new changes took place in public sub-political attitudes. In short, former movements began to be transformed into Jacobin centres and their radical actions sometimes became movements of an organised minority. Otherwise they were often responses of the whole community. At the core of Jacobinism, there were artisans first and then many kinds of people including labourers, manufacturers, gentry, professionals and so on who began to take part in agitations for parliamentary reforms (the Corn Laws, income tax and so forth) after 1815. Afterwards radicalism seemed to influence not only Chartism but also

contributed to forming a working-class consciousness through lots of movements (Thompson, 1991).

Hence, from the perspective of working class formation, the nineteenth century seems to be important because the working class was created and developed during that time. In these processes workers recognised the necessity of cooperation with each other in workplaces and they began to combine to protect themselves against physical assault, arbitrary dismissal, pay cuts and so on. They could be classified by distinctions within the workers' communities, which were established simply by communality among them, namely the 'respectable' and the 'rough' working class. First of all, becoming 'respectable' seemed to be influenced by income and stability of job, and accordingly this class faction was mostly composed of skilled workers because they had regular work and higher wages. Also, they and their families had similar habits to the bourgeoisie or the middle class such as abstinence, saving, holidays, Sunday schools and so on. On the other hand, the 'rough' working class lived in rough areas in the cities, characterised by irregular work, lower wages and relatively unrespectable lifestyles. Over time, the size of the rough working class was reduced and the respectable working class expanded, especially after the Second World War because of full employment, and at the same time the rough areas were developed and reconstructed. As a result of the mutual dependence and cooperation among workers mentioned above, working class organisations were created and developed, and then they raised their voices with a number of demands. Whilst it was possible for employers to suppress employees' combinations in the 18th and at the beginning of the 19th century, after the formation of trade unions by skilled workers in the 1850s, the employers began to recognise and consult with the trade unions. Indeed, semi-skilled and unskilled workers joined the trade union movement pioneered by skilled workers, and most industries had trade unions after the First World War. Although the trade unions were developed as effective combinations, workers felt the limits of industrial action, and the importance of political representation was recognised. Accordingly, the Labour Party was created in 1900, and the political voice of working class has been represented by this Party so far. The working class which created these organisations can be summarised with five characteristics. First the working class was pervaded by a 'meritocratic' culture which applauded skill, effort, output and career. Second, it recognised the necessity of solidarity among workers. Third, they created organisations such as trade unions and a political party to protect themselves. Fourth, the working class sought public health and education

services. Fifth, it wanted regular work and wages to be ensured (Roberts, 2001: 81-87).

As mentioned earlier, the working class which is represented in Thompson's and Roberts' books is the original working class. With the wane of the original one, it seems to be necessary to explore relatively 'new' debates about a new working class. The new (post-Second World War) working class can be characterised by several features and debates. First, the 'embourgeoisement thesis' in the 1950s and 1960s, which was about 'the economic, social, cultural and political assimilation of manual workers into the middle class'. This was inspired by several changes of context such as full employment, steady economic growth and regular pay rises. However, the embourgeoisement thesis was not generally supported in sociology, and the study which investigated workers in Luton in the mid-1960s by John Goldthorpe, David Lockwood, Frank Bechoffer and Jennifer Platt, produced evidence to reject the thesis. This study was based on interviews with 229 male manual workers and 54 white-collar workers as a comparison group who were from three companies - car manufacturing, engineering and a chemical company. This research was significant in determining the sociological view for the new working class for two reasons. Firstly, Luton was well selected as a research place because this town was not a traditional industrial city but had expanded dramatically through employee migration in the 1950s and 60s, and did not have a long-standing working class history or culture. Secondly, the similarities and differences between the traditional and new working classes were specified. The reasons why the embourgeoisement thesis was rejected were as follows: first, most respondents identified with the working class. Second, most workers were members of trade unions and they stressed the necessity of trade union representation. Third, 71 percent of the workers had voted for the Labour Party in most recent general election. Fourth, very few manual workers had white-collar friends, and they tended to have no relationships with managers outside the workplace. Indeed they had no tendency to join any formal leisure associations or to expand their social networks. Hence, even if the wage of the working class and its job stability had improved, the working class was not integrated into the middle class but preserved its own identity, values and political preferences (Roberts, 2001: 89-92).

The key, distinguishing features of the new working class were said to be 'privatism' and 'instrumentality'. It was claimed in the Luton study that workers were not associating with working class colleagues (as well as

with their managers) in the workplace. They were often separated from each other by noise or they were tied to individual work stations by machinery. Even though 'teamwork' and 'quality groups' have been promoted by a number of large companies since the 1970s, the privatism of the working class in the workplace has probably expanded. The lives of the new working class outside the workplace were similar, namely home-centred. They preferred doing something at home including watching television rather than going out to pubs to communicate with their friends. In Willmott and Young's study of Bethnal Green, and in Jeremy Seabrook's study which was about working class life in northern cities, it was shown that the working class and its patterns of family life were being privatised. In terms of 'instrumentality', as the workers' lives were home and family centred in the Luton study, the new working class had a tendency to regard their jobs not as purposes or values in themselves but as means to ends. In other words, the workers made money to support their family or home-centred lifestyles, and their orientations towards trade unions and the Labour Party seemed to be similar. They supported trade unions to protect their jobs as earning instruments, and their support for the Labour Party was based not on solidarity but pragmatic reasons (Roberts, 2001:92-94).

However, there were several criticisms on the analysis of the new working class in Luton, and whether the characteristics of the new working class were well analysed, especially recognition of jobs as basically financial instruments, and privatised lifestyles. In fact, a follow-up study of affluent workers was conducted again in Luton in the 1980s by Devine, and it was found that the earlier investigators had partly misunderstood how and why Luton's workers were privatised in the 1960s. In other words, their privatism was not chosen but constrained by several factors which prevented their socialising activities: long and unsocial working hours, financial pressure and so on. Another criticism was that the earlier investigators had underestimated 'the dehumanising character of work'. In fact, the new working class seemed able to develop radical orientations. Nevertheless, in essentials the Luton study of the new working class is likely to have been correct in its analysis of post-war change in its character (Roberts, 2001:94-96).

Since the Luton studies, a number of social changes related to the working class have taken place in Britain: a rapidly increased rate of unemployment, long-term industrial decline, labour market flexibility, job insecurity, globalisation and so forth. In fact with the emergence of new technology a

number of new kinds of jobs have been created. Indeed, many manual jobs in manufacturing industries, which have become smaller, have been outsourced into service sectors. Factories have been moved outside towns and cities, and the labour market has changed. The proportions of women and ethnic minorities in both manual and non-manual occupations have increased, and in the process groups that are excluded from the fully employed working class have been created (Roberts, 2001: 96-118). Within this changing context, the working class and the labour market will now be investigated further through comparisons between Britain and Korea.

Korean workers

The formation of a working class in Korea is more recent than in Britain. Just as this formation occurred alongside the industrialisation in Britain, in Korea it began with the start of industrialisation in the 1960s. Huge general strikes took place in 1987 and 1996-97, and they accelerated the development of labour movements and attracted the attention of people all over the world (Chung, 2006). Hagen Koo's book on Korean workers focuses on a historical analysis of Korean working-class formation during industrialisation, and how the characteristics of the labour movement have changed. Particularly, it investigates how class consciousness has developed, and how it has been reflected in workers' organisational, cultural and institutional actions (Koo, 2001). Comparing Korea with Europe, there is a difference in time, cultural, social and political contexts, alongside similarities in that both experienced a growth of the working classes with rapid industrialisation. In fact, several findings from early working class formation in Europe seem to be relevant in exploring Korean working class formation. Firstly, artisans played a lead role in Europe's working class movements, not factory hands. The former provided a number of cultural and organisational assets, and leadership for others in workers' struggles because they seemed to feel moral and social outrage at the proletarianisation of workers including themselves. Secondly, the French Revolution of 1789 and subsequent upheavals provoked ideological and political debates in working class movements. In particular, the formation of class consciousness was influenced strongly. Thirdly, political institutions such as political parties provided organisational resources for working class movements. In other words, they played a key role in the development of working class organisations and actions.

In comparison to Europe's working class and its "struggles", Korea did not have a cultural tradition of artisans because within Confucian culture their

social status was low. Learning and brain work were respected. Thus, Korean workers experienced proletarianisation without either a cultural or organisational basis for resistance. Moreover, there was no a dominant ideology or big event like the French Revolution to support the working class movement ideologically. Since the Second World War the Korean peninsula had become a centre of the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the US. In particular, anti-communism was the dominant ideology at that time which resulted in the suppression of labour actions and movements. Accordingly, the political and ideological circumstances surrounding working class formation were unfriendly. Indeed, political institutions such as a labour party which could have supported workers' movements did not exist. Instead of that, the state directly foisted the national goal, namely 'modernisation of the fatherland', upon industrial workers. In other words, the Korean government offered conceptions of 'nationalism', 'familism', 'harmony' and 'national security' to the people, and traditional Confucian ethics such as 'diligence', 'loyalty' and 'worker-management harmony' were stressed in industrial workplaces. Hence the development of workers' identity through the working class movements was blocked by these cultural and political factors, and the ideological environment. Workers were regarded as 'menial' and 'contemptible' objects, and they were often called *kongsuni* (factory girl) or *kongdori* (factory boy).

At this point, Koo proposes the question of how the workers could overcome these environmental disadvantages and develop a collective identity as worker. The characteristics of the early working class movement can be summarised as follows: first of all, Korean workers present a combative spirit in labour struggles and a high level of political consciousness. They seem to respond morally and emotionally to the various suppressions around them because they demand social justice and humane treatment rather than more impersonal things such as improvements in working conditions and wages. In fact the oppressions have been derived from cultural and symbolic as well as economic factors, and in particular these factors have included offensive and authoritarian managements within factories. Secondly, since the middle of the 1970s the number of industrial workers has increased rapidly, and at the same time they have been congregated within several industrial areas. Active social and political movements led by churches and students that arose outside the industrial field helped to develop the identity and consciousness of the working class. Thirdly, 'the workers' grassroots union movement' was secretly connected with 'the political movement for democracy' that was

led by students, intellectuals, church leaders and dissident politicians. During all this, the Korean government intervened directly in relations between labour and managements, and thereby influenced the connection between workers and the political movements. Fourthly, cultural suppression under the slogans of Confucianism, and the state intervention in the workers' movement, oppressed and at the same time, through their reactions, improved workers' identity and consciousness.

To understand these characteristics of the Korean workers' movement, it is necessary to consider its deeper historical background. The modern Korean labour movement seems to have begun with rapid industrialisation in the middle of the Japanese colonial period (1910-1945). In fact the first appearance of the movement was at the beginning of the 1920s, and disputes between labour and Japanese employers and managements often took place. In the 1930s the number of labour disputes was greater than in the 1960s and 70s. However, labour movements during the colonial period tended to be closer to independence movements against Japanese colonial rule rather than economic labour movements. These movements were strongly oppressed in the 1930s, after which Korean labour movements went underground and developed close connections with communist movements. After liberation from colonial rule in 1945, the labour movement developed a stronger capacity for organisation and leadership. The National Council of Korean Trade Unions (Chŏnp'yŏng) was formed in August 1945. In fact it has been asserted that this period (1945-47) was the most violent in Korean labour history until the general strikes in 1987. Nevertheless, in 1946 the Federation of Korean Trade Unions (Daehan Noch'ong) was founded to compete with left-wing trade unions and to destroy Chŏnp'yŏng with the support of US military troops. Accordingly, communist labour movements were weakened until the end of Rhee's regime (1948-1960). The labour movements had continuously been suppressed by Park Chung Hee's military regime (1963-1979) even if labour disputes, movements and street demonstrations were revived during the short period of the Chang Myon government (1960-61). During Park's regime Korea was rapidly industrialised, and economic development acquired a priority compared with other factors. The government tried to eliminate all obstacles to economic development, namely labour activists, their strikes and so on. Moreover workers' legal rights were restrained and the connection between labour unions and political groups was constrained. Firms were not concerned about the improvement of labour's skill and productivity. They were not interested in the employee's welfare but only in profit. Hence the history of suppression of working class movements

that has been constantly repeated since the Japanese colonial regime by US troops and Rhee and Park's dictatorial governments, and these absolute and authoritative powers failed to develop labour-management relations and to improve working conditions.

A brief history surrounding Korean working class formation is as above. At this point the differences can be highlighted, even if both Britain and Korea have had 'suppression' histories of working class movements. That is, Korean workers relatively easily acclimatised themselves to a new environment while British workers began to struggle against huge changes derived from industrialisation. The reasons why the Korean workers accommodated themselves better than the British counterpart can be indicated in three factors: education system, army and family. At the same time it is also an important background to these factors that Korean society had already experienced geographical migration and a wage worker life in the city because of the Korean Civil War in the 1950s, which preceded full-scale industrialisation (Koo, 2001:46-48).

The first factor is the education system. The Confucian culture which stressed education and the Rhee government's investment in education improved the education level, and the modern education system has produced children ready to become industrial workers. Secondly, most Korean men should legally go into the army and they have helped to make the industrial system into a hierarchy like an army. Thirdly, the traditional family system (based on Confucian teaching) is reflected in an authoritarian structure, like the relations between labour and management within a factory. Confucianism demands respect for elders in a family, and towards heads of villages, heads of companies and departments within companies, and also prescribes the subordination of women to men. Following these precepts is expected to create harmony and strength. Accordingly Korea has produced a labour force suited to an export-oriented economy. Thus in comparison with the west, Korean employers have not seemed to be dissatisfied with the worker's pre-industrial working habits, and on the other hand the workers have not been discontent with the 'new-industrialised' working environment.

Nevertheless their working conditions in Korean industry have been poor, as in the west during the early industrial period when the working conditions of western industrial workers such as working time, working environment, wages, health, relations between labour and management and so forth were poor. First of all, working hours were extremely long

and unregulated. In fact it seemed that the workers laboured for more hours than suggested by statistical data. Indeed overtime work was regarded as a means of enlarging the wage for a worker, whilst it was used by management as a tool to control and separate workers. An anti-hypnotic pill may be a good example to represent the long working hours of Korean workers. The workers have used it on themselves to work much longer, and managements have also encouraged them to use it. In the second place, a high rate of industrial accidents has been an outcome of dangerous working conditions including noise, dust, high temperatures at workplaces, harmful gases and so on. Moreover these accidents derive from manufacturers' disregard for workers' health and safety. Thirdly, in comparison with other countries, Korean manufacturing industry has had a relatively high separation rate. Koo indicated that the high separation rate could represent a lack of worker loyalty toward the company, and at the same time the lack of employers' concern for their employees. Finally, in terms of relations between labour and management, labour has been weaker than management, and has had no ability to negotiate to improve conditions. In particular, one of the important features of these relations has been the distinction between blue and white collar which is derived from Confucianism, namely an 'extremely contemptuous attitude toward and demeaning status of physical labour' (Koo, 2001: 62). Managerial power in the factories has been despotic and has influenced not only working time but also personal space and bodily matters such as regulating the length of hair. Moreover the army culture (as mentioned above) has helped to create authoritarian and patriarchal relations between labour and management.

Rather than poor working conditions, Korean labour movements have been aided by two kinds of assistants: Christian churches and students. First, a church with a mainly female congregation led early labour movements in the 1970s. People who took part in small group activities and a workers' night school under the church's care and administration, led a grassroots union movement. Most of their information on leading the movement, such as the importance of trade unions, how to organise and how to manage, was derived from these group activities and schools. The Catholic organisation, Young Catholic Workers (Jeunesse Ouvrière Chretienne, JOC) and the Protestant group, Urban Industrial Missions (UIM) played a key role in the democratic union movement at the time. These organisations realised that it was necessary to improve working conditions rapidly and created education programmes to produce labour activists. This was despite being established for purely religious purposes

at the beginning of the 1960s. Union organisers seemed to be in contact with external supports such as church organisations and intellectual communities in the process of their struggles because 'internal structures', namely the official unions within the FKTU (Federation of Korean Trade Unions) and the government's 'Bureau of Labor', had become the military authority's vehicle for labour control (Koo, 2001:77). The labour movements of workers themselves had gradually degenerated into struggles between male and female workers. The reasons were as follows. A gender discrimination ideology derived from Confucius was used subtly by managements. They corrupted male workers with money and promotion, and tried to build up male trade unions against female counterparts which were otherwise hard to control. Afterward the grassroots union movements intensified, and at the same time externalised and became politicised. The repressions by the state and managements had been increasingly enforced, and had resulted in a stronger coalition between labour and dissident political communities.

During later labour struggles, the union activists were dissatisfied with the moderate attitudes of the churches. Thus the role of church was weakened. The union activists were fired and deprived of work opportunities at other places, which helped to re-create them as professional activists and gradually enlarged this advanced labour group. Thus the labour movements no longer needed the churches' support. However, they neither developed independently nor combined with one another in the larger political struggle against the authoritarian government. In the early 1980s the number of factory workers increased rapidly and class consciousness was also developed rapidly. Under these circumstances they were recognised as a major social force in the new industrial society, and another assistant to labour, students, clearly recognised the workers' potential. The student activists used the labour movements as a new strategy for their political goals that were 'ending military rule' and 'achieving the radical transformation of South Korean society'. They became factory workers and tried to promote class consciousness and help to build trade unions.

So the workers developed the labour movement with these two assistants. However, in the processes of this development, several key events can be regarded as essential factors leading to church and student support. First of all, Chun Tae-Il, who was a 22-year-old tailor in Pyunghwa market, had gasoline poured over his body and was set on fire on 13 November 1970. He was concerned about inferior working conditions in the apparel industry and spent a lot of time and effort trying to improve the working

conditions of about 20,000 workers. Despite his efforts, his petitions were rejected and derided, and finally he decided on self-immolation as a demonstration. After he died his death was recognised as 'a critical inter-linkage between labour struggles and the students' political struggles for democracy' (Koo, 2001: 72).

In the 1980s two events were important in the role of the students and developing a solidarity consciousness in labour struggles, namely 'the Daewoo Auto Strike' and 'the Kuro Solidarity Struggle'. First, the Daewoo Auto Strike occurred in the process of wage negotiation between labour and management, and this struggle was important because it was the first organised strike in the heavy industry as well as in a conglomerate. Moreover, in this strike male workers were the main performers, spreading the labour movement from light to the heavy industry and a large company. Second, after the Daewoo Auto Strike, the Kuro Solidarity Struggle began at Daewoo Apparel which was a medium-size clothing mill in Kuro Industrial Park. Three union leaders were arrested by the police on 22 June 1985. At the time there were no problems between labour and the company, and indeed the union had not engaged in any conflicts against the management. The labour movement leaders believed that the government intended to obliterate the democratic union movement starting with Deawoo Apparel. Their solidarity strikes had political characteristics as they were explicitly against oppressive authority, namely the government, and for six days eight firms and about 2,500 workers were involved in these struggles. The Kuro struggle was obviously regarded as a solidarity struggle because it led to a great deal of participation by employees who worked in several firms around the Kuro industrial area, and it became the beginning of further intensified solidarity among workers, students and anti-government groups that were campaigning for justice and democracy. Moreover, in this struggle not only student activists but also professional labour activists who had common struggle experiences played important roles as messengers promoting worker solidarity across companies.

The democratisation struggle in 1987 was led by students and there was lots of participation by white collar workers, small business owners, the urban poor and industrial workers. Although this struggle was not successful in mobilising workers in the mass political demonstrations, the industrial workers engaged in a series of labour disputes after the success of this democratisation struggle. However, these disputes, such as 'the 1987 Great Worker Struggle', were not organised and unified labour strikes, and their main demands concerned wages and authoritarian

relations between labour and management. However, the result was that a number of unions and union members were created through the struggle, and all newly established unions were democratic labour unions. Most existing unions which were controlled by the management were changed into representative unions. Moreover, the organisational development of blue collar workers, plus white collar and professional workers, who worked in financial firms, media companies, hospitals, the printing industry and research institutes under the government, led to a successful co-ordination of the unions. At the time the job market for white collar workers was worsening. Rapid proletarianisation was underway, and they had quite critical attitudes toward the authoritarian organisation of their workplaces and the political-ideological control of the government over intellectual labour. The white collar workers who studied at universities in the 1980s brought their student activist culture into their workplaces, and they made an effort to create more democratic and humanitarian conditions. Accordingly, the active white collar worker movements became another important axis in the democratic labour union movements.

During the 1990s the workers gradually developed organisational ability, even though the labour movements had apparently been stagnating. Through the General Strike in 1996-97, the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) which was established in 1995, had obtained the right of citizenship and it played a key role in establishing the first labour party, the Democratic Labour Party, in 2000 (Chung 2006). Despite these outcomes it seemed that the strikes were not evaluated as successful. In fact the strikes were triggered by new labour laws which included several provisions for employers such as not allowing workers to form additional unions for a few years, and giving more power and flexibility to dismiss and hire employees or temporary workers. Although the strikes which aimed at job security led to the successful national mobilisation of workers, they allowed employers' dismissal rights to continue. Instead of securing workers' jobs, the government had chosen to resuscitate companies that had been bankrupted by the economic decline of Korea.

To investigate the class consciousness of the Korean workers, it seems to be necessary to consider the meaning of 'humane treatment' which includes demands for minimal working conditions and improvements in industrial relations. The demands for the humane treatment were resisting material and symbolic oppression which indicated that the workers should tolerate machine noise and dust as well as mental and physical cruelty as part of daily life. The reason why these matters were regarded as low

priorities was their assessment through the Confucian tradition that associated physical labour with low wages. In fact the workers seemed to feel more discrimination between the educated and the uneducated rather than between capitalist and proletariat, or the rich and the poor. Hence there were many attempts to improve their educational level such as night schools and private institutions, and these attempts were evaluated as one of bases to promote their class consciousness.

The other basis for consciousness formation was 'Minjung Movement'. 'Minjung' referred to people who were politically suppressed and socially excluded. As a resistance against material and symbolic oppression, there were not only attempts at educational upgrading but also a tendency to break away from the factories. Under these circumstances the labour movement combined with the Minjung culture, including communal-collective splits, critical calls for social justice and cultural activities such as working class literature, musical instrument performances, masked dances and workers' newspapers. In total, this resistance against material and symbolic oppression, trials to upgrade their educational level and the Minjung culture all assisted the formation of class consciousness.

In conclusion, both English and Korean workers have developed as working classes, and can be compared and contrasted. A summary comparison of working class formation in Britain and Korea is in Table 2.1.