

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **A. Background of the Study**

As a great and modern state, United States ever got bad history. United States got Greet Depression after World War I. It is such economy crisis. This crisis began in October 1929 (United States Information Agency 285). The stock market crashed, wiping out 40 percent of the paper values of common stock. After the stock market collapse, however, politicians and industry leaders continued to issue optimistic predictions for the nation's economy. But the Depression deepened, confidence evaporated and many lost their life savings. By 1933 the value of stock on the New York Stock Exchange was less than a fifth of what it had been at its peak in 1929 (English Illinois online).

The Great Depression directly ruins the economy of the state and indirectly affects to people lives. Business houses closed their doors, factories shut down and banks failed. As the consequence of this, the rate of unemployment and crime are high. People need jobs, but most of the owners of the industry do not want to open recruitment because of that condition. This causes the composition of the number of the employer and the worker is imbalance. Because of it, the employer has higher position than the employees and later on the exploitation is begun. The employers exploit the employees to run their business.

As a creature, human being interacts with others to complete their necessities. Sometimes this relation brings advantages, but sometimes it gives

disadvantages. Many benefits people gain from developing a relationship, for example when one is sorrow or hurt other will come to regale. This harmony relationship will not always appear in the business or industry area. Power relation prevails in this location, for instance an employer has absolute rights toward his business and also employee. If we think deeply most of relations between employer and employee in industrial area are imbalance. This factor generally becomes a reason why the employee doing a strike. This idea is applied on Clifford Odets's play *Waiting for Lefty* that the writer is going to analyze.

*Waiting for Lefty* is written by Clifford Odets in 1935. Odets is a son of Russian Jewish immigrants who was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on 18<sup>th</sup> July 1906. He pursued his career as an actor in New York after dropped out from senior high school. He worked on radio and in theater for helping form the Group Theater in New York. This group commits to create plays that dealt with important social issues in United States (VanSpanckeren 78).

Besides being the member of the theater, Clifford Odets also becomes the member of a left wing party (csustan online). A year later, he produced *Waiting for Lefty* that was an immediate success and drew high praise from drama critics. He wrote many dramas, but *Waiting for Lefty* is his debut and is the most popular one. *Waiting for Lefty*, written in 1935, has a framing device that is pure agitprop. It is set in a union hall during a strike, based on a recent violent strike by New York taxi drivers (adbureau online).

This drama raises the theme of the consciousness of the workers toward their conditions especially in the workplace and in the union. The story unfolds

through a series of six scenes, in which the characters present compelling arguments that support the strike. The characters here divided into two based on the position of the characters in the workplace. The first position is the employers; they are Fayette, Doctor Barnes, and Harry Fatt, while the second is the employees include of Miller, Doctor Benjamin, Joe Mitchell, and Sid. Build on the convention in the society, the employers are the superior, vice versa the employees are the inferior class. As inferior of the superior, the employees become the object of the employers. This class has pitiful conditions, especially financial condition. Each of the character has personal experiences and tragedies in the workplace. They work all day long just for finishing their work, but what they have done sometime improper with requital of that work. Their affliction is so hard.

All of employees both manual (blue collar) and managerial (white collar) workers expect to get the best when they work, but sometimes their expectation is different from the reality. The employers control over the employees. The employers can do what they want in order their business runs well and gets profits. To reduce superiority of the business owner, most of employees join in a union. According to Budd, union is a formal or informal group of workers who join together to influence the nature of their employment (4). This represents the employee to negotiate with the employer about aspects of employment contract include wages and condition of work. Thus, the union is the representative of the employees that are seeking improved wages and benefits, or protection against

arbitrary treatment and discharge or a greater voice in workplace decision making (Budd 4). This seems like the employees' home.

All of the workers in *Waiting for Lefty* are also the member of the union. This union led by Harry Fatt. Though they join in union, it does not mean they are automatically far from problem in the work area. One has a problem that differs with others, take for an example Doctor Benjamin. He is underestimated and discriminated because he is not rich and inherits Jew blood. The newest policy in the hospital also makes him more disparaged. He is discharged from his position and the charity program of the hospital is closed. He is objection to that decision and complains to the administrator of the hospital. He hears all his complaint, yet he cannot do anything for him. This factor encourages him to leave his profession and choose cab as the newest profession. In the new area, he encounters with other cabs that have the same problem with him. Because they shelter under the union, they discuss their problem together.

In union they share their problem and try to figure out the cause of the problem. Strike is one of the ways they propose to solve their problem. The prime reason why they force to strike is hoping for the better wages and the other reason is struggling for their dignity and justice. The difficulty in their lives and job lead them up to the strike. They realize that change is necessary in their society and the only way to accomplish their objective is to band together and find solidarity in each other. Thus from the title of the drama, *Waiting for Lefty* the readers or the spectators of the play can guess the story tells about. The word *Lefty* is such a

metaphor for the change to shift the condition around the workers. The change can be successful if all of them unite and have the same perspective.

One thing that motivates the writer of the study this subject is because this drama though was written in the 1935, the underlying theme of it still acceptable in this modern society. The situation at that period still occurs nowadays, especially in Indonesia. Almost everyday electronic media and printed media issue news about workers strike who works whether in the big or small industries demand the good policy especially about their wages and condition of work.

## **B. Statement of the Problems**

1. What class structures emerge in the place of work in *Waiting for Lefty*?
2. What factors make the workers are aware to change their conditions in *Waiting for Lefty*?
3. How do the workers change their conditions as depicted in *Waiting for Lefty*?

## **C. Objective of the Study**

This writing is to find out two significant points, which are:

1. To find out the class structures those are established in the play.
2. To find out the factors that make the workers aware upon their conditions which are exhibited in the *Waiting for Lefty*
3. To find how the workers change their conditions as pictured in *Waiting for Lefty*.

#### **D. Significance of the Study**

The writer's expectation from studying this drama is to give depiction to the readers that play is not only interesting to watch but also to analyse. Many messages we can get from reading the drama. By analysing the drama, the writer wants to show the readers that the drama entitled *Waiting for Lefty* is an example of the workers' struggle against the employers to get the better conditions, especially the justice in the workplace. Related to the topic and the title of the study, *The Struggle of the Taxi Drivers as Depicted in Clifford Odets's Waiting for Lefty*, the main point of this study is to present the struggle of the workers to get justice in the workplace and in the union. The workers should strive to get those dreams. Furthermore, the writer hopes that this study can give any contribution to the study of literature in general, especially in English Department of Airlangga University.

#### **E. Scope and Limitation**

In order to gain a comprehensive analysis and systematic understanding according to the statement of the problems, the writer will focus the analysis on the class structures that emerge in the place of work, the conditions and the relation of the workers with their employers as portrayed in *Waiting for Lefty* by Clifford Odets. The analysis will be centralized into the factors which make the workers aware of their conditions which inspire them to struggle to change their conditions. This analysis will also view the elements of the drama to support the analysis.

## **F. Theoretical Background**

To support the analysis of the study, the writer will apply the concept of Karl Marx's Marxism. It is applied to analyse the drama based on the statement of the problems. This analysis also applies the intrinsic elements of drama such as character, setting, theme, symbols, and plot in order to enrich the analysis. DiYanni states that all the elements work together to convey feeling and embody meaning, for example character. It is related to the other elements and to the work as a whole (44). In the play *Waiting for Lefty*, intrinsic approach is applied to see conditions of the employers and workers. Inside of the condition, it also used to see the relationship between the employers and the workers. Sargent states in his book *Contemporary Political Ideologies* that classes are economic in nature and are groups ordered according to their relationship to the nonhuman powers of production and each other (99).

Marxism concept is applied to see the domination of the employers toward workers and the effect of the domination. This mean is also applied to see workers reaction in responding the circumstance especially what the superior has done as depicted in the *Waiting for Lefty*.

## **G. Method of the Study**

### **1. Technique of Data Collecting**

The technique of collecting data consists of certain steps. The first step is library research. The aim of this research is to obtain information that can support the analysis. It is applied by gaining and collecting the important information

from printed materials such as books, encyclopaedias, and dictionaries and also from sites related to the life and the works of Clifford Odets. The other sources are also gained from the books dealing with the literary approach used in the analysis of the play.

After collecting the data, the next step is close reading. In this step, the writer tries to understand the text of the work. The third step is classification by determining the data that can be used in the analysis. The data should have connection with the author and also the work.

## 2. Technique of Analysis Data

The technique of analysis data is by close reading. In this section, reading the text to dig more information about the work is necessary. Besides close reading, descriptive analysis is used as the technique of data analysis. It is applied to give descriptive explanation of the problem found in the text through the dialogues, events, and narrations in the text. In addition, the writer will use some quotations from a variety of source to validate and support the analysis.

### **H. Definition of Key Terms**

<i>Union</i>	An organization of workers who have banded together to achieve common goals in key areas such as wages, hours, and working conditions.
<i>Class</i>	A division in the people in society as the result of the competition of controlling means of production.



<i>Strike</i>	An effort on the part of the workers to obtain some of the improvements
<i>Blue collar</i>	Manual workers who sell their body force to the employers.
<i>White collar</i>	Managerial workers who sell their skill to the employer