

## **BIG IDEAS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD OF DISABILITY**

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### **Information Pack**

#### **Who works?**

#### **Marx and the reserve army of Labour**

Presented by  
Lee Humber

#### **Background to Karl Marx**

#### **Who wants a job? Drama game**

#### **Discussion**

## About the Workshop

1. Saying hallo - your name and ONE thing you want to tell us.
2. Lee will give a short talk with some slides and take questions.
3. Our drama game is "Who wants this job?"
4. Discussion - what do we think about the reserve army of labour?
5. Final thoughts

After the workshop we will have a short discussion about the Big Ideas series and what we can do next.

## About Lee

Lee has worked with people with learning disabilities for nearly 35 years.

He has worked closely with *My Life My Choice* in Oxford, one of the UK's leading self-advocacy organisations, on research projects.

For many years he lectured in universities, including Oxford Brookes University and Ruskin College, Oxford.

He now works for the Citizens Advice.

He did a PhD with the Open University in 2007-2011 and studied the working lives of people with learning disabilities. He has written many papers and books.

Lee Humber (2019). *Vital Signs: The deadly cost of health inequalities*. Pluto Press.

## Reading about Marx

*Marx for Beginners* by Rius - this is in cartoons

Free download at [https://archive.org/details/Introducing\\_Marx](https://archive.org/details/Introducing_Marx)

<https://www.mylifemychoice.org.uk/articles/200-pioneers-learning-about-people-with-learning-disabilities-in-ww1>

## Background -Karl Marx and ideas about work

Karl Marx (1818-1883) was born in Germany. He lived and wrote in London for many years.

His wife Jenny and daughter Eleanor helped him with his work and were political thinkers and doers as well.

He also worked with his friend Friedrich Engels.

Together they developed their ideas about how societies are organised.

### **Marx: ideas about work**

Marx said that people who are in power are the “ruling class”. They are in charge of land and money and resources. They employ people to work for them. Because they want to make a profit, they pay people as cheaply as possible.

Lee will tell us how Marx's ideas help us understand what keeps people with learning disabilities in poverty.

- Reserve army of labour are people out of work, on the edge of work, in low paid work.
- People with learning disabilities are part of the reserve army of labour
- Being part of the reserve army of labour keeps people with learning disabilities in poverty
- Great thinkers have always argued that poverty is a central cause of learning disabilities
- Great thinkers have always argued and shown that people with learning disabilities can and do work and benefit from it financially and intellectually

## Dictionary

### *Benefit*

Something good for you

### *Reserve*

A reserve is money or things or staff that you keep back to use when you need it

Reserve labour: people who can come in and take jobs when they are needed

### *Poverty*

Being poor, not having enough to live on

### *Profit*

If you can sell something for more than it costs you to make, then you have a profit. All businesses want to make profits.

### *Loss*

If you have to sell something for less than it costs to make, then you make a loss. Businesses do not want to make losses.

## **Drama Game: Who wants this job?**

This drama is designed to show that when there is a reserve army of labour, those in power can decide on wages, and who to employ. If workers are desperate they may agree to low wages and poor working conditions.

The Owner

The Manager

The Workforce

The Owner owns the business

He wants to make a profit

The Manager

The manager decides who will come and work for the owner

The Workforce

That's you lot

We don't have enough jobs for all of you, you know.

So you will have to persuade us if you really want this job..

Let's see what happens at your interview.....