

Fri., April 22, 1988 Morning Advocate

Mandatory minimum wage completely, morally wrong

In his views expressed here on April 14, Mr. Hal Ruddick promotes several economic and moral fallacies concerning the minimum wage. In many of Mr. Ruddick's collectivist/altruist-oriented arguments, he ignores the basic issue. The issue is: is a minimum wage morally *right* or is it morally *wrong*?

Morally, a minimum wage is completely wrong. There is no reason whatsoever to support the conclusion that a man (an employer) *must, by law* offer no less than a minimum amount to another man (a potential employee) for a job.

The liberals, altruists and other friends of socialism do not realize that it is simply impossible to harm a man by *making him an offer*. He is not "exploited." If the offer is too low, he can refuse it. Otherwise, if it is to his benefit, he can accept it. Either way, he is not

harmed — and he is possibly better off. A man can only benefit by having a higher number of alternatives from which to choose.

If, for example, I *offer* you the ridiculously low salary of *one dollar per year* to work for me — full time — I have not in any way violated your rights. Yet, by the minimum wage law it is *illegal* for me to make this offer to you.

Laws should be passed only to *protect individual rights*. The minimum wage presupposes that it is possible to violate a man's rights by making him an offer. It is not. In fact, a minimum wage law *necessarily* violates the rights of the employer. He should, in a moral, free country, be able to do *whatever he wants* with *his* money and *his* business — as long as he doesn't break the law or violate anyone's rights. In fact, the minimum wage violates a (potential) employee's rights to — by artificially restricting the economic choices open to him.

The final moral fallacy supported (perhaps unwittingly) by Mr. Ruddick lies in his concept of *rights*. Through some perverse notion, supporters of the welfare-state, the minimum wage, tariffs and other such abominations have come to believe that men have a *right* to food and shelter (from *whom?*), a *right* to an education (from *whom?*), a *right* to electricity (from *whom?*), and to many other "free-rides" (from *whom?*).

The most eloquent answer to this hideous distortion of the concept of rights comes from The Declaration of Independence: it states that all men have "certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." Notice please, Mr. Ruddick (and other minimum wage supporters), that men have a Right to the *pursuit* of Happiness — not a right to *happiness*.

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