

Wage Slavery

Don't get triggered, even capitalists can believe in wage slavery

There's probably a good reason that the term wage slavery triggers you. Big government supporters often use the term to explain why the government needs to step in to create labor that is more fair.

Don't let that stop you from agreeing that there is a problem with labor not matching up to wages. This is your chance to get these people to come to libertarianism. Remember; if you don't admit there's a problem, you can't start on the solution.

Know your history

The economic history of America, though we are a new nation, is relatively long. We did not always operate in the system we do now. At one time, your bank would monetize your goods. At another time, your job would provide you with housing. The concept of wage labor came shortly after our founding and was not immediately successful. It brought an end to an era of artisan goods.

Cicero, of ancient Rome, warned against authoritarian capital, saying, "whoever gives his labor for money sells himself and puts himself in the rank of slaves." (Cicero)

Two modern studies, which you can read in our show notes, say, "slaves' material conditions in the 19th century were "better than what was typically available to free urban laborers at the time" (Margo & Steckel 1982, Fogel 1994). This is corroborated by general observation from that time period, which we have also included in the show notes (PBS, Marx).

Frederick Douglass, a former slave, initially supported wage labor, as it came to be called, saying, "now I am my own master," (Douglass 1994), but changed his mind and said, "experience demonstrates that there may be a slavery of wages only a little less galling and crushing in its effects than chattel slavery, and that this slavery of wages must go down with the other" (Douglass 2000).

Though guys like Douglass used the term, it was popularized in the middle of the 19th century by the Lowell Mill Girls, who made half the wages of their male counterparts. They came to realize that the textiles and clothing they made would have sold for the same value as the ones the men made.

During the industrial revolution, revolutionaries gave up trying to fight the system, began using the term "wage labor," and began to fight for increasing minimum wage instead of changing the system.

Remind your leftist friends that big government actually causes, not alleviates, wage inequality

There is nothing stopping the government, right now, from giving the money to you instead of the Central Bank or the Chamber of Commerce or their crony allies that help them get elected. When we argue for minimum wage increases, we are demanding that companies pay us more; but their money is often restricted by the source of all money, which is the government. What's more, the government has incentive to give out money only to companies that will see the money go back to the government itself, by either loan or tax, so it is not distributed equally.

UBI (minarchist favored) or decentralization (anarchist favored) are ways around the current system.

Sources

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