## Util Framework

### Yudkowsky

#### Revisionary intuitionism is true.

**Yudkowsky 8**

Eliezer Yudkowsky (research fellow of the Machine Intelligence Research Institute; he also writes Harry Potter fan fiction). “The ‘Intuitions’ Behind ‘Utilitarianism.’” 28 January 2008. LessWrong. http://lesswrong.com/lw/n9/the\_intuitions\_behind\_utilitarianism/

I haven't said much about metaethics - the nature of morality - because that has a forward dependency on a discussion of the Mind Projection Fallacy that I haven't gotten to yet. I used to be very confused about metaethics. After my confusion finally cleared up, I did a postmortem on my previous thoughts. I found that my object-level moral reasoning had been valuable and my meta-level moral reasoning had been worse than useless. And this appears to be a general syndrome - people do much better when discussing whether torture is good or bad than when they discuss the meaning of "good" and "bad". Thus, I deem it prudent to keep moral discussions on the object level wherever I possibly can. Occasionally people object to any discussion of morality on the grounds that morality doesn't exist, and in lieu of jumping over the forward dependency to explain that "exist" is not the right term to use here, I generally say, "But what do you do anyway?" and take the discussion back down to the object level. Paul Gowder, though, has pointed out that both the idea of choosing a googolplex dust specks in a googolplex eyes over 50 years of torture for one person, and the idea of "utilitarianism", depend on "intuition". He says I've argued that the two are not compatible, but charges me with failing to argue for the utilitarian intuitions that I appeal to. Now "intuition" is not how I would describe the computations that underlie human morality and distinguish us, as moralists, from an ideal philosopher of perfect emptiness and/or a rock. But I am okay with using the word "intuition" as a term of art, bearing in mind that "intuition" in this sense is not to be contrasted to reason, but is, rather, the cognitive building block out of which both long verbal arguments and fast perceptual arguments are constructed. I see the project of morality as a project of renormalizing intuition. We have intuitions about things that seem desirable or undesirable, intuitions about actions that are right or wrong, intuitions about how to resolve conflicting intuitions, intuitions about how to systematize specific intuitions into general principles. Delete all the intuitions, and you aren't left with an ideal philosopher of perfect emptiness, you're left with a rock. Keep all your specific intuitions and refuse to build upon the reflective ones, and you aren't left with an ideal philosopher of perfect spontaneity and genuineness, you're left with a grunting caveperson running in circles, due to cyclical preferences and similar inconsistencies. "Intuition", as a term of art, is not a curse word when it comes to morality - there is nothing else to argue from. Even modus ponens is an "intuition" in this sense - it's just that modus ponens still seems like a good idea after being formalized, reflected on, extrapolated out to see if it has sensible consequences, etcetera. So that is "intuition".

#### That means util.

**Yudkowsky 8**

Eliezer Yudkowsky (research fellow of the Machine Intelligence Research Institute; he also writes Harry Potter fan fiction). “The ‘Intuitions’ Behind ‘Utilitarianism.’” 28 January 2008. LessWrong. http://lesswrong.com/lw/n9/the\_intuitions\_behind\_utilitarianism/

However, Gowder did not say what he meant by "utilitarianism". Does utilitarianism say... That right actions are strictly determined by good consequences? That praiseworthy actions depend on justifiable expectations of good consequences? That probabilities of consequences should normatively be discounted by their probability, so that a 50% probability of something bad should weigh exactly half as much in our tradeoffs? That virtuous actions always correspond to maximizing expected utility under some utility function? That two harmful events are worse than one? That two independent occurrences of a harm (not to the same person, not interacting with each other) are exactly twice as bad as one? That for any two harms A and B, with A much worse than B, there exists some tiny probability such that gambling on this probability of A is preferable to a certainty of B? If you say that I advocate something, or that my argument depends on something, and that it is wrong, do please specify what this thingy is... anyway, I accept 3, 5, 6, and 7, but not 4; I am not sure about the phrasing of 1; and 2 is true, I guess, but phrased in a rather solipsistic and selfish fashion: you should not worry about being praiseworthy. Now, what are the "intuitions" upon which my "utilitarianism" depends? This is a deepish sort of topic, but I'll take a quick stab at it. First of all, it's not just that someone presented me with a list of statements like those above, and I decided which ones sounded "intuitive". Among other things, if you try to violate "utilitarianism", you run into paradoxes, contradictions, circular preferences, and other things that aren't symptoms of moral wrongness so much as moral incoherence. After you think about moral problems for a while, and also find new truths about the world, and even discover disturbing facts about how you yourself work, you often end up with different moral opinions than when you started out. This does not quite define moral progress, but it is how we experience moral progress. As part of my experienced moral progress, I've drawn a conceptual separation between questions of type Where should we go? and questions of type How should we get there? (Could that be what Gowder means by saying I'm "utilitarian"?) The question of where a road goes - where it leads - you can answer by traveling the road and finding out. If you have a false belief about where the road leads, this falsity can be destroyed by the truth in a very direct and straightforward manner. When it comes to wanting to go to a particular place, this want is not entirely immune from the destructive powers of truth. You could go there and find that you regret it afterward (which does not define moral error, but is how we experience moral error). But, even so, wanting to be in a particular place seems worth distinguishing from wanting to take a particular road to a particular place. Our intuitions about where to go are arguable enough, but our intuitions about how to get there are frankly messed up. After the two hundred and eighty-seventh research study showing that people will chop their own feet off if you frame the problem the wrong way, you start to distrust first impressions. When you've read enough research on scope insensitivity - people will pay only 28% more to protect all 57 wilderness areas in Ontario than one area, people will pay the same amount to save 50,000 lives as 5,000 lives... that sort of thing... Well, the worst case of scope insensitivity I've ever heard of was described here by Slovic: Other recent research shows similar results. Two Israeli psychologists asked people to contribute to a costly life-saving treatment. They could offer that contribution to a group of eight sick children, or to an individual child selected from the group. The target amount needed to save the child (or children) was the same in both cases. Contributions to individual group members far outweighed the contributions to the entire group. There's other research along similar lines, but I'm just presenting one example, 'cause, y'know, eight examples would probably have less impact. If you know the general experimental paradigm, then the reason for the above behavior is pretty obvious - focusing your attention on a single child creates more emotional arousal than trying to distribute attention around eight children simultaneously. So people are willing to pay more to help one child than to help eight. Now, you could look at this intuition, and think it was revealing some kind of incredibly deep moral truth which shows that one child's good fortune is somehow devalued by the other children's good fortune. But what about the billions of other children in the world? Why isn't it a bad idea to help this one child, when that causes the value of all the other children to go down? How can it be significantly better to have 1,329,342,410 happy children than 1,329,342,409, but then somewhat worse to have seven more at 1,329,342,417? Or you could look at that and say: "The intuition is wrong: the brain can't successfully multiply by eight and get a larger quantity than it started with. But it ought to, normatively speaking." And once you realize that the brain can't multiply by eight, then the other cases of scope neglect stop seeming to reveal some fundamental truth about 50,000 lives being worth just the same effort as 5,000 lives, or whatever. You don't get the impression you're looking at the revelation of a deep moral truth about nonagglomerative utilities. It's just that the brain doesn't goddamn multiply. Quantities get thrown out the window. If you have $100 to spend, and you spend $20 each on each of 5 efforts to save 5,000 lives, you will do worse than if you spend $100 on a single effort to save 50,000 lives. Likewise if such choices are made by 10 different people, rather than the same person. As soon as you start believing that it is better to save 50,000 lives than 25,000 lives, that simple preference of final destinations has implications for the choice of paths, when you consider five different events that save 5,000 lives. (It is a general principle that Bayesians see no difference between the long-run answer and the short-run answer; you never get two different answers from computing the same question two different ways. But the long run is a helpful intuition pump, so I am talking about it anyway.) The aggregative valuation strategy of "shut up and multiply" arises from the simple preference to have more of something - to save as many lives as possible - when you have to describe general principles for choosing more than once, acting more than once, planning at more than one time. Aggregation also arises from claiming that the local choice to save one life doesn't depend on how many lives already exist, far away on the other side of the planet, or far away on the other side of the universe. Three lives are one and one and one. No matter how many billions are doing better, or doing worse. 3 = 1 + 1 + 1, no matter what other quantities you add to both sides of the equation. And if you add another life you get 4 = 1 + 1 + 1 + 1. That's aggregation. When you've read enough heuristics and biases research, and enough coherence and uniqueness proofs for Bayesian probabilities and expected utility, and you've seen the "Dutch book" and "money pump" effects that penalize trying to handle uncertain outcomes any other way, then you don't see the preference reversals in the Allais Paradox as revealing some incredibly deep moral truth about the intrinsic value of certainty. It just goes to show that the brain doesn't goddamn multiply. The primitive, perceptual intuitions that make a choice "feel good" don't handle probabilistic pathways through time very skillfully, especially when the probabilities have been expressed symbolically rather than experienced as a frequency. So you reflect, devise more trustworthy logics, and think it through in words. When you see people insisting that no amount of money whatsoever is worth a single human life, and then driving an extra mile to save $10; or when you see people insisting that no amount of money is worth a decrement of health, and then choosing the cheapest health insurance available; then you don't think that their protestations reveal some deep truth about incommensurable utilities. Part of it, clearly, is that primitive intuitions don't successfully diminish the emotional impact of symbols standing for small quantities - anything you talk about seems like "an amount worth considering". And part of it has to do with preferring unconditional social rules to conditional social rules. Conditional rules seem weaker, seem more subject to manipulation. If there's any loophole that lets the government legally commit torture, then the government will drive a truck through that loophole. So it seems like there should be an unconditional social injunction against preferring money to life, and no "but" following it. Not even "but a thousand dollars isn't worth a 0.0000000001% probability of saving a life". Though the latter choice, of course, is revealed every time we sneeze without calling a doctor. The rhetoric of sacredness gets bonus points for seeming to express an unlimited commitment, an unconditional refusal that signals trustworthiness and refusal to compromise. So you conclude that moral rhetoric espouses qualitative distinctions, because espousing a quantitative tradeoff would sound like you were plotting to defect. On such occasions, people vigorously want to throw quantities out the window, and they get upset if you try to bring quantities back in, because quantities sound like conditions that would weaken the rule. But you don't conclude that there are actually two tiers of utility with lexical ordering. You don't conclude that there is actually an infinitely sharp moral gradient, some atom that moves a Planck distance (in our continuous physical universe) and sends a utility from 0 to infinity. You don't conclude that utilities must be expressed using hyper-real numbers. Because the lower tier would simply vanish in any equation. It would never be worth the tiniest effort to recalculate for it. All decisions would be determined by the upper tier, and all thought spent thinking about the upper tier only, if the upper tier genuinely had lexical priority. As Peter Norvig once pointed out, if Asimov's robots had strict priority for the First Law of Robotics ("A robot shall not harm a human being, nor through inaction allow a human being to come to harm") then no robot's behavior would ever show any sign of the other two Laws; there would always be some tiny First Law factor that would be sufficient to determine the decision. Whatever value is worth thinking about at all, must be worth trading off against all other values worth thinking about, because thought itself is a limited resource that must be traded off. When you reveal a value, you reveal a utility. I don't say that morality should always be simple. I've already said that the meaning of music is more than happiness alone, more than just a pleasure center lighting up. I would rather see music composed by people than by nonsentient machine learning algorithms, so that someone should have the joy of composition; I care about the journey, as well as the destination. And I am ready to hear if you tell me that the value of music is deeper, and involves more complications, than I realize - that the valuation of this one event is more complex than I know. But that's for one event. When it comes to multiplying by quantities and probabilities, complication is to be avoided - at least if you care more about the destination than the journey. When you've reflected on enough intuitions, and corrected enough absurdities, you start to see a common denominator, a meta-principle at work, which one might phrase as "Shut up and multiply." Where music is concerned, I care about the journey. When lives are at stake, I shut up and multiply. It is more important that lives be saved, than that we conform to any particular ritual in saving them. And the optimal path to that destination is governed by laws that are simple, because they are math. And that's why I'm a utilitarian - at least when I am doing something that is overwhelmingly more important than my own feelings about it - which is most of the time, because there are not many utilitarians, and many things left undone.

## Farmers DA

### Shell

#### Minimum wage hike causes farmers to lay people off—this encourages greater mechanization

**Owens 15**

Howard Owens. “Farmers say increase in minimum wage will hurt agriculture in New York.” The Batavian. March 18th, 2015. http://thebatavian.com/howard-owens/farmers-say-increase-minimum-wage-will-hurt-agriculture-new-york/47083

Farmers are facing ever escalating expenses, lower prices and now Gov. Andrew Cuomo wants to raise the minimum wage on them. That's just more than many New York farmers are going to be able to bear, said Dean Norton, a farmer in Elba and president of the New York State Farm Bureau. "New York is already a tough state to do business in and a minimum wage increase is going to continue to make us disadvantageous," Norton said during a conference call this morning with media from throughout the state. Joining Norton on the call were Sandi Prokop and Brian Reeves, owners of multi-generation farms in Middleburgh and Baldwinsville. Each said a minimum wage increase would add significant costs to their operations, $44,000 annually for Prokop and $50,000 for Reeves. And that doesn't include the pressure a minimum age increase would put on suppliers and service companies to raise their rates, driving operational costs up even further. The average farm worker in New York earns $12.50 an hour already, Norton said. Even though the proposed increase from Cuomo is less than that -- to $10.50 an hour -- a minimum wage increase tends to drive up wages across the board. When trainees and entry-level workers get more money, the people above them want to keep pace with the higher pay, so they demand higher wages. Farmers who don't meet those demands, Norton said, risk losing skilled and experienced workers to other farmers willing to pay those wages, or the workers will look for work in other states where conditions are more favorable. Workers who are dissatisfied with their current conditions will also change careers, going into related industries, Reeves said. The upward pressure on wages just encourages farmers to abandon labor-intensive crops or move to greater mechanization, such as robotics at dairy farmers, which means fewer workers churning economic buying power in their local communities. Both Prokop and Reeves noted that in their segments of agriculture -- dairy and vegetables -- they're not price makers, they're price takers." The food processors and supermarket chains who purchase their crops set the prices, based on supply and demand and in competition with other states. "We're already one of the higher cost states," Reeves said. "When I sell a box of zucchini, I'll have a buyer tell me he can get it cheaper in another state. He'll say, 'I can buy all I want for $11 a box, why do you want $13 or $14 a box?' " Dairy prices have been falling for months, Prokop said, and haven't hit bottom yet. In February, she said, she received $24,000 less for milk than the month before, and her revenue was down $13,000 the month before that. "It's only going to get worse this month," she said. "The price is now below the cost of production." It would help, Reeves said, if Congress would step in and set a higher minimum wage across the board, because at least then farmers in all states would be paying the same price for labor. "We need to be able to compete," he said, "with Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Michigan."

#### Mechanized agriculture causes soil erosion

**Trautmann et al 12**

Nancy M. Trautmann and Keith S. Porter (Center for Environmental Research ) and Robert J. Wagenet (Dept. of Agronomy, Cornell University). “Modern Agriculture: Its Effects on the Environment.” 2012. http://psep.cce.cornell.edu/facts-slides-self/facts/mod-ag-grw85.aspx

Farm labor requirements diminished with the introduction of mechanization. Invention of machines for tilling, planting, reaping, and threshing vastly increased farm efficiency in the mid 1800s. The internal combustion engine was invented in Europe in the late 1800s, and in 1892 the first successful gasoline-powered tractor was introduced in Iowa. By the early 1900s tractors that were small enough and cheap enough to interest the average farmer and could do the work of 17 men and 50 horses were being produced. Tractors gradually became popular, although it was not until 1953 that there were more tractors than horses on U.S. farms. Ever since colonial days, agricultural leaders have been interested in increasing the productivity of American farming. George Washington and Thomas Jefferson were leading agricultural reformers in the late eighteenth century, experimenting with crop rotation, manure applications, new crops, and improved livestock. In 1862 President Lincoln signed legislation creating the U.S. Department of Agriculture and granting public land to the states for establishment of agricultural colleges. Federal support for state agricultural experiment stations began in 1887, providing the basis for scientific improvement of American agriculture. As land became less available for settlement in the West, people became more interested in maintaining soil fertility and increasing crop yields on their existing farms. In 1914 Congress responded to this need by providing funds for state agricultural extension programs assist farmers in adopting improved farming methods. Conservation Beginnings. The unprecedented damage to farmland caused by the dust bowl storms of the 1930s focused national attention on the need for soil and water conservation measures to maintain farm productivity. Before settlement the Great Plains had consisted of vast acreages of grasslands roamed by wandering herds of bison and antelopes. The grasses were adapted to cycles of moisture and drought, and their dense root systems held the powdery soils in place against the strong prairie winds. The Homestead Act signed by President Lincoln in 1862 offered free land to anyone willing to cultivate it for 5 years, but it was not until production of the steel plow in the late 1800s that widespread cultivation became possible on the dense sods of the plains. The rich soils produced bountiful crops, and between 1870 and 1910 the population of seven plains states increased by a factor of 10, faster than any other section of the country at any time. In the 1930s, however, disaster struck. Several years of severe drought caused crop failures leaving the light-textured, powdery soils unprotected against the strong prairie winds. Millions of tons of rich topsoils were lost in dust storms so severe that they caused virtual blackouts in the middle of the day and left houses, roads, and fields buried by dust and sand. Skies were blackened as far east as New York City, and even ships 300 miles out in the Atlantic Ocean reported dust accumulations on board. In response to the urgent need for soil and water conservation programs to halt farmland destruction, the Soil Conservation Service was established in 1935. SCS employees set up demonstration plots and taught methods such as contour plowing, terracing, and strip-cropping to retain water on the fields and reduce runoff and erosion. Windbreaks were planted to break the force of the prairie winds, tillage methods were changed to reduce exposed soils, and vegetation or stubble was retained on the fields after the growing season to provide protective cover. With these methods, damaged lands were reclaimed and the dust storms were brought under control. Intensification of Agriculture. Productivity of U.S. agriculture increased gradually until World War II when the additional demands for food led to rapid changes in farming methods. The war economy stimulated the conversion from animal to mechanical power, resulting in increased output per worker. Use of fertilizer increased by 50 percent between 1940 and 1944, resulting in greater crop returns. The discovery of DDT and other synthetic organic pesticides vastly increased pest control capabilities and made it possible to increase efficiency through practices such as continuous cropping and devoting large acreages to a single crop. In the 25-year period between 1950 and 1975, agricultural productivity changed more rapidly than at any other time in American history (fig. 1. See fact sheet). Although the acreage in farming dropped by 6 percent and the hours of farm labor decreased by 60 percent, farm production per hour of on-farm labor practically tripled, and total farm output increased by more than half. These dramatic changes were produced by technological innovations, development of hybrid strains and other genetic improvements, and a fourfold increase in the use of pesticides and fertilizers (fig. 2. See fact sheet). The result of all these changes has been that agriculture has become more intensive, producing higher yields per acre by relying on greater chemicals use and technological inputs. It also has become more expensive, relying on purchase of machinery and chemicals to replace the heavy labor rcquirements of the past. To remain competitive, farmers have been forced to become more efficient, farming ever larger acreages with bigger equipment and more fertilizers and pesticides. Small farms growing a wide variety of crops have in large part been replaced by much larger farms consisting of extensive fields of a single crop. As a result, the number of farms has dropped by half since 1950, and average farm size has doubled (fig. 3. See fact sheet). Today only 2 percent of U.S. farms produce 70 percent of the vegetables, 50 percent of the fruit and nuts, and 35 percent of the poultry products grown in this country. Although the intensification of agriculture has vastly increased productivity, it also has had a number of potentially detrimental environmental consequences, ranging from rapid erosion of fertile topsoils to contamination of drinking water supplies by the chemicals used to enhance farmland productivity.

#### Soil erosion causes extinction

**Monbiot 15**

George Monbiot 15, British author and syndicated columnist, environmental activist, “We’re treating soil like dirt. It’s a fatal mistake, as our lives depend on it,” 3/25/15, http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/mar/25/treating-soil-like-dirt-fatal-mistake-human-life

Imagine a wonderful world, a planet on which there was no threat of climate breakdown, no loss of freshwater, no antibiotic resistance, no obesity crisis, no terrorism, no war. Surely, then, we would be out of major danger? Sorry. Even if everything else were miraculously fixed, we’re finished if we don’t address an issue considered so marginal and irrelevant that you can go for months without seeing it in a newspaper.¶ It’s literally and – it seems – metaphorically, beneath us. To judge by its absence from the media, most journalists consider it unworthy of consideration. But all human life depends on it. We knew this long ago, but somehow it has been forgotten. As a Sanskrit text written in about 1500BC noted: “Upon this handful of soil our survival depends. Husband it and it will grow our food, our fuel and our shelter and surround us with beauty. Abuse it and the soil will collapse and die, taking humanity with it.”¶ The issue hasn’t changed, but we have. Landowners around the world are now engaged in an orgy of soil destruction so intense that, according to the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organisation, the world on average has just 60 more years of growing crops. Even in Britain, which is spared the tropical downpours that so quickly strip exposed soil from the land, Farmers Weekly reports, we have “only 100 harvests left”.¶ To keep up with global food demand, the UN estimates, 6m hectares (14.8m acres) of new farmland will be needed every year. Instead, 12m hectares a year are lost through soil degradation. We wreck it, then move on, trashing rainforests and other precious habitats as we go. Soil is an almost magical substance, a living system that transforms the materials it encounters, making them available to plants. That handful the Vedic master showed his disciples contains more micro-organisms than all the people who have ever lived on Earth. Yet we treat it like, well, dirt.¶ The techniques that were supposed to feed the world threaten us with starvation. A paper just published in the journal Anthropocene analyses the undisturbed sediments in an 11th-century French lake. It reveals that the intensification of farming over the past century has increased the rate of soil erosion sixtyfold.¶ Another paper, by researchers in the UK, shows that soil in allotments – the small patches in towns and cities that people cultivate by hand – contains a third more organic carbon than agricultural soil and 25% more nitrogen. This is one of the reasons why allotment holders produce between four and 11 times more food per hectare than do farmers.¶ Whenever I mention this issue, people ask: “But surely farmers have an interest in looking after their soil?” They do, and there are many excellent cultivators who seek to keep their soil on the land. There are also some terrible farmers, often absentees, who allow contractors to rip their fields to shreds for the sake of a quick profit. Even the good ones are hampered by an economic and political system that could scarcely be better designed to frustrate them.¶ This is the International Year of Soils, but you wouldn’t know it. In January, the Westminster government published a new set of soil standards, marginally better than those they replaced, but wholly unmatched to the scale of the problem. There are no penalities for compromising our survival except a partial withholding of public subsidies. Yet even this pathetic guidance is considered intolerable by the National Farmers’ Union, which greeted them with bitter complaints. Sometimes the NFU seems to me to exist to champion bad practice and block any possibility of positive change.¶ Few sights are as gruesome as the glee with which the NFU celebrated the death last year of the European soil framework directive, the only measure with the potential to arrest our soil-erosion crisis. The NFU, supported by successive British governments, fought for eight years to destroy it, then crowed like a shedful of cockerels when it won. Looking back on this episode, we will see it as a parable of our times.¶ Soon after that, the business minister, Matthew Hancock, announced that he was putting “business in charge of driving reform”: trade associations would be able “to review enforcement of regulation in their sectors.” The NFU was one the first two bodies granted this privilege. Hancock explained that this “is all part of our unambiguously pro-business agenda to increase the financial security of the British people.” But it doesn’t increase our security, financial or otherwise. It undermines it.¶ The government’s deregulation bill, which has now almost completed its passage through parliament, will force regulators – including those charged with protecting the fabric of the land – to “have regard to the desirability of promoting economic growth”. But short-term growth at the expense of public protection compromises long-term survival. This “unambiguously pro-business agenda” is deregulating us to death.¶ There’s no longer even an appetite for studying the problem. Just one university – Aberdeen – now offers a degree in soil science. All the rest have been closed down.¶ This is what topples civilisations. War and pestilence might kill large numbers of people, but in most cases the population recovers. But lose the soil and everything goes with it.¶ Now, globalisation ensures that this disaster is reproduced everywhere. In its early stages, globalisation enhances resilience: people are no longer dependent on the vagaries of local production. But as it proceeds, spreading the same destructive processes to all corners of the Earth, it undermines resilience, as it threatens to bring down systems everywhere.¶ Almost all other issues are superficial by comparison. What appear to be great crises are slight and evanescent when held up against the steady trickling away of our subsistence.

### Case Turn

#### DA turns the case. Respect for the environment is a pre-requisite to rights.

**Elliott 3**

Herschel Elliott (Penn State Professor of Agricultural and Biological Engineering

Fate And Control Of Pollutants In Soils And Water), “Tributes to Garrett Hardin The Revolutionary Import of Garrett Hardin's Work.” The Garrett Hardin Society. July, 2003. http://www.garretthardinsociety.org/tributes/tr\_elliot\_2003jul.html

Indeed, conditions of impending and intractable scarcity change the types of behavior that are suited to the various environments in which they occur. They change the moral behavior that is possible. As always, the moral necessity stands to discriminate against those who break moral law. For example, Western ethics discriminates against thieves, murderers, and all who commit immoral acts. It does not give them equal rights, freedoms, and opportunities. Similarly, **an ethics founded on the environmental principle discriminates against those who trash their environment**s and those who fail to control their reproductive behavior. It does not give them equal rights, freedoms, and opportunities. Hence human rights are not universal and the obligation to render philanthropic aid to all in need is **not unconditional**. People who either ignore or deny the environmental principle diminish their rights, freedoms, and opportunities. They may forfeit their right to philanthropic aid as well. Just as Western ethics does not subsidize or reward people for their sins, so an ethics founded on the environmental principle does not subsidize or reward people for their environmental sins.

## UBI CP

### Text

#### Counterplan: Just governments should provide every citizen 18 years of age and older the opportunity to receive a guaranteed basic income adjusted for inflation. Unemployment compensation and food stamps will phase out. Funding is through a reduction in corporate tax loopholes.

### Solvency

#### The counterplan reduces inequality and poverty

**Gibson 14**

Carl Gibson (co-founder of US Uncut). “The Case for a Basic Guaranteed Income for All.” Huffington Post. May 13th, 2014. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/carl-gibson/the-case-for-a-basic-guar\_b\_5311330.html

If you have to pay taxes for existing, you should be guaranteed a basic minimum income for surviving. It wouldn't amount to much, but guaranteeing every American citizen 18 and older $1,000 per month, or $12,000 a year, is the most reasonable, practical, and commonsense way to address the inequality crisis that everyone in the country and most of the world is talking about right now. By all, I mean everyone over age 18, regardless of their current job and income situation. It would be optional, so those who already have fulfilling careers or make sufficient enough income to not need the extra $1,000 a month don't have to take it. Ideally, this basic guaranteed income for all would be adjusted for inflation, and would phase in gradually while unemployment compensation and food stamps phase out. Other staples of the safety net, like Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, would still remain. And really, who could argue against this proposal? If we started our welfare spending over from scratch, and just went ahead and guaranteed everyone $1,000 a month, adjusted for inflation, people in poverty would be much better off. Especially given that Republicans in the House of Representatives continue to refuse an extension of unemployment benefits for the long-term unemployed (and even refuse to hear stories of struggle from the unemployed), cut billions of dollars from food stamps (in a bipartisan bill), and continue to propose budgets that would rend all social safety nets to pieces in order for larger corporate welfare packages. Or that Senate Republicans who consistently approve "cost-of-living" raises for themselves still don't find it necessary to increase the minimum wage. What does $1,000 a month buy? It can pay for a modest apartment in the $600 to $700 range, a meager amount of groceries, provide enough to pay for a basic phone plan, and leave enough left over for bus/cab fare. It can't pay for high-end cars, flat screen TVs, condominiums, dining out for every meal or a cocaine habit. That amount of money is roughly the same amount of money one would get working a minimum wage job at part-time hours for a large corporation that only sees you as a tool to use for increasing its own profit margin. This means people working at fast food corporations like McDonalds would be able to quit their jobs and have enough to meet the most basic expenses, while looking for more fulfilling work, getting an education, starting their own businesses and otherwise working toward their dreams. Conversely, if someone spends one third of a 24-hour day sleeping, and one third of the day working a job they hate that doesn't pay nearly enough to live on, that only leaves another eight hours for meeting all of their daily obligations, caring for their families, and finding ways to dig themselves out of wage slavery. Until we get a basic guaranteed income for all, a wide majority of Americans who are lucky enough to be employed will serve indefinite sentences of indentured servitude to immensely profitable and profoundly greedy fast food and retail robber barons.

#### Reducing corporate tax loopholes is sufficient to fund a guaranteed basic income

**Gibson 14**

Carl Gibson (co-founder of US Uncut). “The Case for a Basic Guaranteed Income for All.” Huffington Post. May 13th, 2014. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/carl-gibson/the-case-for-a-basic-guar\_b\_5311330.html

The cost of guaranteeing every adult citizen (approximately 225 million, according to census figures) $12,000 a year is roughly $2.8 trillion. That sounds like a lot, until looking into just one of the least-mentioned sources -- offshore tax havens. Currently, $32 trillion is stashed in offshore accounts in notorious tax havens like the Cayman Islands and Bermuda. Much of that is profit made in the U.S. by American corporations, but booked overseas to avoid taxes. And as journalist Nicholas Shaxson wrote in "Treasure Islands," much more of it is held in blind trusts operated by oppressive authoritarian regimes, drug cartels, human traffickers, and other unsavory characters. $2.8 trillion isn't even one eighth of that amount. We aren't asking for the whole pie, just a piece. And we'll even save them a bite. A few commonsense loophole closures like getting rid of the "carried interest" loophole, eliminating transfer pricing schemes like the "Dutch Sandwich" and "Double Irish" tax loopholes, and instituting a one percent sales tax on all financial transactions on Wall Street would be more than enough to cover the cost of a universal guaranteed income for all. And we still haven't even discussed other widely-supported, commonsense initiatives like turning wasteful Pentagon spending like the F-35 project into money set aside for a universal basic income, taxing investment income at the same rate as real, actual work, raising the inheritance tax to pre-Bush levels, or creating new tax brackets for millionaires and billionaires. By providing a basic income for all citizens through ending tax loopholes and preferential tax treatments for the super-wealthy, we're directly correcting the ever-growing gap between the few who have more than they could ever spend in multiple lifetimes, and the vast majority fighting over crumbs. More importantly, we're also giving the poorest Americans a fighting chance at fulfilling their dreams, rather than spending their best years slaving away for a corporate giant that doesn't respect basic human needs. We can't call ourselves a free country until working Americans are freed from poverty wages and dead-end jobs.

#### UBI solves power imbalance between employers and employees

**Pettit 7**

Philip Pettit (Laurence S. Rockefeller University Professor of Politics and Human Values at Princeton University and Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at the Australian National University). “A Republican Right to Basic Income?” Basic Income Studies. Vol 2, Issue 2. December 2007. https://www.princeton.edu/~ppettit/papers/2008/A%20Republican%20Right%20to%20Basic%20Income.pdf

The argument is straightforward. Others will control me, if only in the merely invigilatory fashion, only to the extent that the division of powers between us means that they can interfere with me at will – that is, without prevention – and at tolerable cost, i.e. with a degree of impunity. If I am not assured a basic income, there will be many areas where the wealthier could interfere with me at tolerable cost, without their being confronted by legal prevention of that interference. Suppose there are just a few employers and many available employees, and that times are hard. In those conditions I and those who like me will not be able to command a decent wage: a wage that will enable us to function properly in society. And in those conditions it will be equally true that we would be defenseless against our employers’ petty abuse or their power to arbitrarily dismiss us. Other protections, such as those that strong trade unions might provide, are possible against such alien control. But **the most effective of all protections**, and one that should complement other measures available, would be one’s ability to leave employment and fall back on a basic wage available unconditionally from the state. Next suppose that you live in conditions where you, and perhaps your children, depend financially on your husband. In such conditions he is likely to control you, even though he never resorts to violence or other abuse. He may let you act as you please within certain limits, while being disposed to stop you – at the limit, by leaving you – if you breach those limits. You would live under your husband’s control, almost certainly straining to keep within his restrictions, unless there is an effective, financially viable alternative such as that which a basic income would provide. Other protections may be available here as in the first case – for example, he may be legally required to provide maintenance should you separate – but these are unlikely to be equally effective and in any case they will be powerfully supplemented by a basic income. Such examples show it to be entirely plausible that promoting the resilient, republican possession of basic liberties argues for establishing **a legal right to a basic income**. Such a right would mean that people had adequate income for functioning properly in society. And that income would mean that people would not have to beg the favour of the powerful, or even of the counter-clerk.

#### Empirics prove UBI reduces poverty and doesn’t kill work ethic

**MacQueen 13**

Ken MacQueen (Vancouver bureau chief for Maclean’s, and a reformed Ottawa Parliamentary reporter and columnist. He prefers B.C., where stories hang fat and juicy from the trees, waiting to be shared. He’s also covered the highs and lows of the royal family, and eight Olympic Games). “Is it time to chuck welfare?” Macleans. April 19th, 2013. http://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/time-to-chuck-welfare/

Fresh research by University of Manitoba health economist Evelyn Forget on an experiment into guaranteed income, conducted in the farming community of Dauphin, Man[itoba]., between 1974-79, found that even modest financial security cut hospital visits by 8.5 per cent compared to similar Manitoba communities.“When you realize that Canada is spending something like $50 billion a year on hospitals,” Forget says of the potential reduction, “that’s a lot of money.” There was a decline in accidents and injuries, and significantly fewer visits to doctors or hospitals for mental health reasons, perhaps because a measure of financial security reduced anxiety or depression, researchers concluded. Forget admits she was surprised at the social impact of the modest income security experiment when her team analyzed the neglected data from four decades past. She found the program “put to rest the myth that if you introduced a guaranteed income everybody will stop working.” The only groups inclined to stay out of the workforce longer were teen boys, who were less likely to be pulled out of school before graduation to help support the family. And married mothers had the chance to spend longer with their newborns at a time when maternity leaves were measured in weeks. Since people kept a share of earnings above the benefit level, which was no higher than welfare rates of the day, there was an incentive to work all the harder, says Forget. Amy Richardson, a mother of six who operated a modest beauty salon from her home in Dauphin back then, said the money went for essentials like school books. “It was enough to add some cream to the coffee,” she told the Winnipeg Free Press years later. “Everybody was the same so there was no shame.” While Dauphin was a short-lived 1970s experiment, that era also spawned the Guaranteed Income Supplement for seniors, an innovation that continues to improve lives for millions. The idea was born in the Ontario hothouse of a minority government when premier Bill Davis’s Conservatives were attacked by the opposition for the high rate of poverty among the elderly, many of them single women. Segal, then an adviser to Davis, recalls the plan was created within weeks. Rates of poverty as high as 30 per cent fell to five per cent. It eventually became a national program administered under the federal tax system. Hospital visits for younger retirees fell, longevity increased and seniors were more socially engaged, says Segal. “Why? Because they could actually live a reasonably comfortable life.” Canadian poverty rates for the elderly are now among the lowest among peer nations of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). By contrast, Canada has among the worst scores (15th of 17 countries) in rates of child and working-age poverty. While critics say a guaranteed income is an incentive to “sit home and eat popcorn,” almost 68 per cent of those below the poverty line have jobs, says Segal. “They are working, they’re just not making enough to make their core requirements.”

### N/B

#### Strong consensus of studies confirms minimum wage hikes cause unemployment

**Neumark 14**

David Neumark. (University of California—Irvine, USA, and IZA, Germany). “Employment effects of minimum wages: When minimum wages are introduced or raised, are there fewer jobs? Global evidence says yes.” IZA World of Labor 2014: 6 doi: 10.15185/izawol.6 | David Neumark © | May 2014 | wol.iza.org

An extensive review of this newer wave of evidence looked at **more than 100 studies** of the employment effects of minimum wages, assessing the quality of each study and focusing on those that are most reliable [2], [3]. Studies focusing on the least skilled were highlighted, as the predicted job destruction effects of minimum wages were expected to be more evident in those studies. Reflecting the greater variety of methods and sources of variation in minimum wage effects used since 1982, this review documents a wider range of estimates of the employment effects of the minimum wage than does the review of the first wave of studies [1]. Nearly two-thirds of the studies reviewed estimated that the minimum wage had negative (although not always statistically significant) effects on employment. Only eight found positive employment effects. Of the 33 studies judged the most credible, 28, or 85%, pointed to negative employment effects. These included research on Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, Portugal, the UK, and the US. In particular, the studies focusing on the least-skilled workers find stronger evidence of disemployment effects, with effects near or larger than the consensus range in the US data. In contrast, few—if any—studies provide convincing evidence of positive employment effects of minimum wages.

#### Unemployment turns the case. It means the maxim of living wage contradicts its purpose.

Sollars and Englander 7

Gordon G. Sollars (Assistant Professor of Management, Fairleigh Dickinson University) and Fred Englander (Professor of Economics, Fairleigh Dickinson University). “Sweatshops: Kant and Consequences.” Business Ethics Quarterly, Vol. 17, No. 1 (January 2007), pp. 115-133. http://www.geocities.ws/gjbfj\_ethicscenter/beq17no1sweatshopskantnconsequences.txt

This is to be understood in terms of what can be willed without contradiction, and Kant explains that there are two ways in which contradictions can arise. The first is that some actions have as their maxim something that could not even be conceived as a universal law without contradiction in the conception; the second is that some actions have as their maxim something that, although conceivable, could not be willed without that will contradicting itself. Korsgaard notes that there have been at least three different interpretations of what Kant meant by "contradiction" in the literature (Korsgaard 1996: 78). We cannot hope to do better than to follow the one favored by Korsgaard herself, the Practical Contradiction Interpretation. Korsgaard states: [Tlhe contradiction that is involved in the universalization of an immoral maxim is that the agent would be unable to act on the maxim in a world in which it were universalized so as to achieve his own purpose—that is the purpose that is specified in the maxim. Since he wills to act on his maxim, this means that his purpose will be frustrated. If this interpretation is correct, then it is essential that in testing maxims of actions the purpose always be included in the formulation of the maxim. (Korsgaard 1996: 92) The maxim of paying a subsistence wage could have the purpose of helping persons, whose lot is among the very worst, have some means to use their rationality to achieve "moral perfection" (as discussed above). (Other purposes might also be plausible, but any such purpose would seem to be directed at assisting these persons in some way.) Will this very purpose be frustrated by the universalization of the maxim to pay a subsistence wage? BUSINESS ETHICS QUARTERLY There are three cases to consider: the subsistence wage is below, equal to, or above the market-determined wage. In the first two cases, the purpose can be met by universalizing the maxim, but acting on the maxim has no independent effect. The wage arrived at by the market is already meeting the purpose. The only interesting case is when the subsistence wage is above market levels. When a minimum or subsistence wage is set above the market wage, we argue below (section 4) that the best understanding of the economic literature is that some increased amount of unemployment will result. Assuming, then, that some **unemployment will result** when a wage above the market level is paid, persons who are unemployed will have even fewer means provided to them under the maxim than they would if they were employed at the market wage. Thus, **the maxim contradicts its own purpose**, at least with regard to those who remain or become unemployed. It is open to Arnold and Bowie to argue that the maxim should apply only to those who do manage to get employment under it, but we see no reason why those who cannot find work or who lose their jobs should be excluded from consideration.

**Unemployment is worse for the poor than low wages**

**ALEC 14**

American Legislative Exchange Council. “Raising the Minimum Wage: The Effects on Employment, Businesses and Consumers.” March 2014. <http://www.alec.org/wp-content/uploads/Raising_Minimum_wage.pdf>

The problem plaguing America’s poor is **not low wages, but** rather a **shortage of jobs.**34 At a time when the nation’s workforce participation is only 62.8 percent, policymakers must avoid policies that destroy job opportunities.35 Increasing the minimum wage does nothing to help the unemployed poor. In fact, as discussed above, it hurts individuals looking for employment as it decreases available job opportunities. So, who is helped by an increase to the minimum wage? According to a 2012 report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, although workers under age 25 represented only 20 percent of hourly wage earners, they made up just over half (50.6 percent) of all minimum wage earners.36 The average household income of these young minimum wage earners was $65,900.37 Among adults 25 and older earning the minimum wage, 75 percent live well above the poverty line of $22,350 for a family of four, with an average annual income of $42,500.38 This is possible because more than half of older minimum wage earners work part-time and many are not the sole earners in their households.39 In fact, 83.5 percent of employees whose wages would rise due to a minimum wage increase either live with parents or another relative, live alone, or are part of a dual-earner couple.40 Only 16.5 percent of individuals who would benefit from an increase to the minimum wage are sole earners in families with children.41 With national unemployment still hovering around 7 percent, national, state, and local demands for an increased **minimum wage could not be more ill-timed.**42 Increasing the minimum wage would make it more difficult for emerging businesses to expand payrolls and for existing businesses to maintain employees. Further, a higher wage rate would make it more difficult for individuals with less education and experience to find work. Raising the minimum wage favors those who already have jobs at the expense of the unemployed. Public policy would be more beneficial if it lowered barriers to entry for employment and increased economic opportunities. Raising the minimum wage may be a politically attractive policy option, but it is harmful to the very people policymakers intend it to help.

# AC

## Contention

### Overview

**If she wins intent-foresight, she has to win that the intention of a living wage is deontological to win her offense. The vast majority of policymakers aren’t Kantians, and are influenced more by seeking votes and lobbyists.**

### Employers Turn (Over-demanding)

#### TURN – living wage is over-demanding of employers

Sollars and Englander 7

Gordon G. Sollars (Assistant Professor of Management, Fairleigh Dickinson University) and Fred Englander (Professor of Economics, Fairleigh Dickinson University). “Sweatshops: Kant and Consequences.” Business Ethics Quarterly, Vol. 17, No. 1 (January 2007), pp. 115-133. http://www.geocities.ws/gjbfj\_ethicscenter/beq17no1sweatshopskantnconsequences.txt

Now, Arnold and Bowie might argue that managers of MNEs could do more for the employees of their subcontractors and suppliers. This is true, but then so could anyone. We must be careful not to implicitly turn the ethical principle that "ought implies can" into "can implies ought."\*\* There is any number of things that could be done to remove pain, adversity, or poverty. The bargain (excluding coercion or fraud) between employer and employee is one of those things, and it is perverse to fault it in particular because it might have done more for one party. Note that we do not imply here that a sweatshop worker has no moral grounds for complaint against some party or other simply because she makes a bargain with a subcontractor or supplier of an MNE. Rather, our point is that the subcontractor or supplier has done something via the bargain to reduce pain, adversity, or poverty, while other actors may have done nothing. It is unreasonable to expect any bargain struck between two parties to redress every issue of fairness or desert that may apply to one party. MNEs are in some sense "taking advantage" of background conditions in the Third World when they outsource their production, but this alone does not make them responsible for the poverty that makes their sourcing decisions profitable. It would be a different matter if, for example, particular MNEs conspired with host governments to keep sweatshop workers impoverished. However, Arnold and Bowie provide no examples of this. With regard to MNEs taken as a group, considerable evidence of their salutary effect on Third World poverty comes from a wide variety of sources such as those cited in Maitland {2001) and Brown, Deardorff, and Stern (2004). Arnold and Bowie point out that Kant argued that a rich person has a duty of charity that a poor person lacks, and that Kant acknowledged that individuals have particular duties as a result of particular circumstances.'' However, they do not attempt to derive either of these claims from the Formula of Humanity interpretation of the categorical imperative, so it is not clear how central a position these claims hold in their approach.'" In any event, the duty of charity is a "wide" or "imperfect" duty. Thus, according to Hill's analysis, there is not only freedom to choose to do or not do some act of charity on some occasion, but also latitude for judgment in deciding if a given principle is relevant to a particular situation and freedom to choose various ways of satisfying a principle (Hill 1992: 155). The decision to increase wages is precisely a matter of such judgment. The effect of such a decision could well be to increase unemployment, which would presumably increase pain, adversity, or poverty for those unemployed. Further, the employer could have other duties, in particular a duty to investors or other stakeholders that, given these freedoms of judgment, may mitigate any duty to ameliorate pain, adversity, or poverty beyond the contribution the bargain already makes. We are not directly challenging the Kantian framework. Rather, we are pointing out that the framework itself does not provide support for the selection of a wage level (or working hours) apart from the knowledge of a myriad of factors that are purely contingent. Indeed, Hayek has argued that market institutions are the best we have for dealing with the severe constraints that human beings face in bringing our necessarily fragmented knowledge to bear in a way that will improve our welfare (Hayek 1945). A market wage, even one that is insufficient for meeting basic food and non-food needs, can still be the best alternative to unemployment. As a result of this item-by-item examination of Hill's claims, we conclude that a reliance on market-determined wages—absent coercion or deception—is fully consistent with the Kantian duties of individuals.

### Employees Turn (Alienability)

#### TURN – living wage violates employee rights. Alienability is key.

Powell and Zwolinski 11

Benjamin Powell (Suffolk University) and Matt Zwolinski (UC San Diego). “The Ethical and Economic Case Against Sweatshop Labor: A Critical Assessment.” Journal of Business Ethics. 19 October 2011. http://www.benjaminwpowell.com/scholarly-publications/journal-articles/powell-and-zwolinski-the-ethical-and-economic-case-against-sweatshop-labor.pdf

Of course, none of this would be a problem if the rights in question were alienable by an act of consent on the part of workers. If workers could waive by contract their right to a certain level of safety in the workplace in exchange for a higher paycheck, then the tension between respect for workers’ rights and concern for their welfare could be resolved—workers could claim the protection of their right until and unless they decided that they could do better by waiving it. Most of the rights we think people have are alienable in precisely this way. And for good reason. Alienability seems superior to inalienability on both welfarist and autonomy-based grounds. Giving person the option to waive a right in exchange for some perceived good respects his or her choice in a way that disallowing it does not; and it also puts him or her in a position where he or she is able to exercise the right if and when he or she thinks that is his or her most welfare-enhancing option, but to trade it away if a better opportunity can be served by doing so. Arnold and other critics of sweatshops have not explicitly said whether they believe the workers’ rights they endorse should be waivable in this way. But the kind of rights typically assigned by the OSHA-type regulations endorsed by Arnold are usually not waivable,76 and the general tone of Arnold’s Kantian moral reasoning suggests that he views the underlying moral rights as non-waivable as well. Thus, although Arnold is no doubt sincerely concerned with the autonomy and well-being of workers, the ability of his moral theory to be responsive to those values is severely limited by the way his theory of rights is developed.

### Checks and Balances Turn

#### TURN – living wage violates checks and balances by making social welfare the job of private companies. Tax-funded policies are comparatively better.

Friedman 70

Milton Friedman (Professor of economics at U Chicago; 1976 Nobel Prize in Economics). “The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits.” The New York Times Magazine, September 13, 1970. http://www.colorado.edu/studentgroups/libertarians/issues/friedman-soc-resp-business.html

This process raises political questions on two levels: principle and consequences. On the level of political principle, the imposition of taxes and the expenditure of tax proceeds are governmental functions. We have established elaborate constitutional, parliamentary and judicial provisions to control these functions, to assure that taxes are imposed so far as possible in accordance with the preferences and desires of the public–after all, "taxation without representation" was one of the battle cries of the American Revolution. We have a system of checks and balances to separate the legislative function of imposing taxes and enacting expenditures from the executive function of collecting taxes and administering expenditure programs and from the judicial function of mediating disputes and interpreting the law. Here the business man [person]–self-selected or appointed directly or indirectly by stockholders–is to be simultaneously legislator, executive and, jurist. He is to decide whom to tax by how much and for what purpose, and he is to spend the proceeds–all this guided only by general exhortations from on high to restrain inflation, improve the environment, fight poverty and so on and on. The whole justification for permitting the corporate executive to be selected by the stockholders is that the executive is an agent serving the interests of his [the] principal. This justification disappears when the corporate executive imposes taxes and spends the proceeds for "social" purposes. He becomes in effect a public employee, a civil servant, even though he remains in name an employee of a private enterprise. On grounds of political principle, it is intolerable that such civil servants–insofar as their actions in the name of social responsibility are real and not just window-dressing–should be selected as they are now. If they are to be civil servants, then they must be elected through a political process. If they are to impose taxes and make expenditures to foster "social" objectives, then political machinery must be set up to make the as­sessment of taxes and to determine through a political process the objectives to be served. This is the basic reason why the doctrine of "social responsibility" involves the acceptance of the socialist view that political mechanisms, not market mechanisms, are the appropriate way to determine the allocation of scarce resources to alternative uses.

### Intention Turn

#### TURN – Living wage has the consequentialist intention of redistributing wealth to make people better-off.

Davidov 9

Guy Davidov (Faculty of Law, Hebrew University of Jerusalem). “A Purposive Interpretation of the National Minimum Wage Act.” The Modern Law Review, Vol. 72, No. 4 (Jul., 2009), http://www.jstor.org/stable/20533271

Second, it is misleading to describe the minimum wage as directed at reducing overall poverty. Although it may certainly help to reduce poverty among working families,20 it is only a rather negligible component of broader policies in this regard. The relatively low level of the minimum wage, and its inapplicability to those without employment, make it quite obvious that minimum wage legislation cannot be presumed to reduce poverty substantially. Moreover, if the goal had been to reduce poverty, a minimum wage law would need an additional accompanying justification to explain why the burden of this expense is placed on employers.21 Critics of the minimum wage who bemoan its record in reducing poverty22 or suggest a set of other policies that can better achieve this goal23 are, therefore, misguided. It is simply **not the intention** of minimum wage laws - at least not their main intention - to reduce general poverty.24 Third, current minimum wage laws are not limited in their purpose to the advancement of efficiency, or the correction of market failures, as was perhaps the case with some of the early laws at the beginning of the twentieth century25 A minimum wage set as a single rate (at most with one or two varying rates for specific groups) is much too crude to capture instances of market failure in numerous different settings. As a consequence, minimum wage legislation does both too much and too little in a significant number of cases. This cannot be presumed to be the idea of minimum wage laws.26 Having rejected these aims as the basis of minimum wage legislation, two further aims seem more suitable. One aim is the redistribution of wealth in favour of low-wage workers. The other is the idea that human labour should not be sold for less than a certain minimum that represents minimal respect for the dignity of the worker as a human being. These two basic goals of minimum wage legislation are discussed in turn below. Redistribution Minimum wage laws redistribute resources in favour of low-wage workers. As a positive matter, **this has been a major goal of minimum wage laws around the world.**27 In the UK, Mark Freedland and his colleagues have recently argued that one of the goals of the NMWA has been to ‘make work pay' to replace (to some extent) in-work benefits and shift some of their costs to employers.28 This in effect shows that the NMWA has a redistributive goal. The aim of this section is to argue that this is not only the case as a positive matter; redistribution is also a justified goal of minimum wage laws. There are, of course, those who argue that governments should not engage in redistribution,29 and those who believe that redistribution must be done only through the tax system,30 but a discussion of such arguments is beyond the scope of this article. I will assume, in accordance with the common practice of legislatures and governments around the world, that redistribution is an acceptable goal and one that does not have to be limited to the tax/benefits system.31 Given these starting points, it is not necessary to defend the normative claim concerning minimum wage laws with any particular theory of distributive justice. In light of the inequalities that exist in all capitalist societies, any theory of justice that accepts, in principle, the justifiability of redistribution to achieve equality, would accept the redistribution of wealth from the well-off to the lowest paid as discussed below, whether in order to achieve equality of resources, equality of welfare or equality of opportunities.32 The basic assumption behind the redistributive goal is that since employers are forced to raise the wages of the lowest-paid, these workers are **better off**.33 Empirical evidence supports this assumption and shows that the minimum wage has the effect of compressing the distribution of earnings.34 The crucial question, however, is who pays for this. One can expect, and presumably legislatures do expect, that firms will shift the extra labour costs to consumers by raising prices as much as possible, and perhaps to some extent absorb these extra costs themselves by accepting lower profits. If this is the case, it seems to be a desirable redistribution, whether because employers (who are assumed to be better off) end up paying, or because consumers and perhaps shareholders or other stakeholders pay a small fraction of the cost so that the few lowest-paid workers will have a meaningful pay increase.35 It is interesting to note that according to polls conducted in the United States a large majority supports the minimum wage (although most do not enjoy it themselves) even if it means higher prices.36