



REFLECTING BACK ON MINIMUM WAGE

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Thomas Ollier
ID 10086638

The lonely silence of my home provided a welcoming contrast to the pub as I took the day off; the warm, crackling heat from the hearth allowed for a moment of reflection. Although afflicted with sickness, it did not stop me from keeping up with the weeks news at Town Hall. With the repeal of the Corn Laws last week, this week followed a disturbing surge in food prices. The sheer magnitude of the surge itself becoming restricting to the hard working men, women and children that compose the majority of our great town. The proprietor of the Weaver's Arms begs the question to the reader; if the bulk of our citizens cannot so afford a loaf of bread to share at days end, to what abyss will Manchester sink due to outcry and eventual riots by the Luddites?

It is here where esteemed scholar's wisdom far greater than I can shed light. Adam Smith and David Ricardo both have similar stances on the relation of food expenses and wage. Smith argues that the price of food (and even other commodities) have a direct proportionality with wage. Upon reading *The Wealth of Nations* in my study, I came upon fascinating insights as to how the price of corn, for example, can be calculated. One part of the price of corn pays the landlord, another part pays the labourer and the third part

pays the profit of the farmer¹. It is here where we can focus on the second part of Smith's words. As such, it can easily be extrapolated that a rise in food prices should ultimately reflect back to the workers in the form of an increase in wage. David Ricardo also quite elegantly reinforced the idea with his quote;

“THE NATURAL PRICE OF LABOUR, THEREFORE, DEPENDS ON THE PRICE OF THE FOOD, NECESSARIES, AND CONVENIENCES REQUIRED FOR THE SUPPORT OF THE LABOURER”²



The addition of factories to our town has allowed for great profits to certain individuals. Taxation has also been reduced which again amplifies their profits further. Wage disparity and gap in equality begins to increase. Now with the concept of food prices and wages I previously introduced and clearly demonstrated them being linked, it is natural to discuss some form of remedy to alleviate the fellow citizens. That remedy comes in the form of an increase in minimum wage. I would like to propose an increase of 5 shillings across the board for workers. That would put factory workers at 25s, hand production at 15s and even the children should see their wages increased to 10s so as to better supplement their families. It is high time for the weavers and spinsters to be able to go to sleep without their stomachs aching for food after spending long hours in the scorching atmosphere of the factories.

I implore my fellow Mancunians to take heed to the words written in this article so we can lead our fair town to greater heights; the heights to where the working class are not left below.

¹Appendix A: Smith *Wealth of Nations*, p. 10 (1776)

²Appendix D: David Ricardo, *Principles of Political Economy*, p.4 (1817)