

Minimum wage: The assets and liabilities

Workers exploited

The minimum wage bill is almost a reality. President Nixon vetoed a similar bill in September and, since then, the poor have had to pay for an inflation they had no hand in creating.

Inflation was almost 10 per cent for the 12-month period ending in January. The cost of an average market basket has risen even more, not to mention the terrific increase in fuel costs. Millions of workers have no way to combat such price hikes, and the administration should not leave them defenseless. They should be allowed to live with the increases and live comfortably.

On May 1, the minimum wage will rise to \$2 an hour, or \$4.160 a year, hardly an adequate living for a family of any size. A minimum is just that: no one should be allowed to sink below the poverty line; savings and cut-backs must be taken from the well-to-do. They are the ones who can afford to struggle with inflation, not the workers who have already been exploited.

Most fears about the minimum wage stem from its "dangerous side-effect," unemployment. Rep. Dominick Daniels, D-N.J., of the House Education and Labor Committee contends that "traditional practices which accompany each minimum wage

increase have been successfully refuted by studies of minimum wage effects made by the Department of Labor." If an employer needs an employee, he still has that need no matter what the price. And any reputable employer should be willing to pay a fair living wage to his workers.

Actually very few workers are covered by the law and only those in the most dire straits, as it should be. In North Carolina, for example, most of 1.3 million workers already receive more than the new minimum wage or at least close to it. About 60,000 domestic and agricultural workers are the ones directly affected, and these are the ones who have been ignored for too long.

Students will be exempt if they work in a part-time capacity, thus assuring the availability of summer jobs. And most people who are prosperous enough to be students aren't vitally dependent on employment anyway.

The government is responsible for inflation, and they must pay for it without getting the poor to do it for them, without using the poor as the cutting-edge. It is about time that some of Washington's programs and reforms got turned into dollars and cents at the local level.

The Daily Tar Heel

82nd Year of Editorial Freedom

All unsigned editorials are the opinion of the editors. Letters and columns represent the opinions of individuals.

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The background

Most people who work for a minimum wage, like it. Most economists don't.

The current wage bill was passed easily by Congress last week and Nixon's approval is taken for granted. The bill will raise the minimum wage from \$1.60 to \$2.30 an hour by 1976. Coverage will be extended for the first time to domestic workers, an estimated 50,000 people in North Carolina according to the Raleigh News and Observer. Students who work less than 20 hours a week are not covered by the bill.

The following quotation from Representative Albert Quie, R-Minn, is an example of the calibre of

discussion concerning the issue. "There is no question that this bill is not inflationary because inflation has already occurred," Mr. Quie said. Aside from the double negative, the statement is logically inconsistent and creates the impression that inflation happens all at once and then stops for a while. We wish it did. To add insult to injury, the statement was used as supporting evidence in a News and Observer editorial.

The following pro-con editorials are designed to shed some light on the subject, something which everyone from the average student, to President Nixon, to Mr. Quie himself could see more clearly.

Only temporary relief

Instead of helping workers, raising the minimum wage can only provide temporary relief from economic pressures. The pay increase will reinforce inflationary trends and, in some cases, not give workers more money, or even the same amount, but none at all because of unemployment.

The government can legislate whatever wages it wishes to (or would like to think it could), but some employees aren't worth the extra 70 cents per hour required by law. Businesses don't hire people for their health and, if an employee's time is too expensive, they simply won't buy it.

Earlier wage bills excluded such low salary occupations as farm labor, domestic servants, part-time and student jobs in order to maintain maximum employment. The present bill will let students have the eight-year-old minimum wage, a \$1.60 an hour, a goal both in the interest of students and of the McDonald's Hamburger lobby. But domestics and farm labor will be affected by the bill. Their employers, housewives and farmers, will be forced to do without, rather than retain the services of people they simply can't afford.

This will hurt the poor, specifically the rural poor and those who are desperate enough to swallow their pride and become household servants. These

people had rather have a subsistence at a low wage than no wage at all. If the minimum is increased, all other wage-earners could logically demand pay hikes. When the floor is raised, so is the ceiling.

Large wage costs will increase the costs of production. Higher costs mean higher prices. The wage increase, and its few benefits, will soon be consumed by increases in the cost of living and acceleration of the inflationary spiral. Inflation is doubly dangerous because it provides its own momentum by its very nature. Mandatory pay hikes will even increase that momentum, all for the sake of phantom goals.

Congress must be clever enough to avoid such limited, stop-gap measures. By raising wages they treat only the symptoms of our economic malaise, not the cause. In the long run, there will be even more people out of work, a higher cost of living and even greater pressure for more minimum wage bills. People on fixed incomes will be caught in the crunch.

More realistic measures must be devised by Congress. More complicated solutions like a negative income tax, eliminating the foreign trade deficit and reducing congressional spending are crucial to the welfare of American workers. They aren't as popular or as easy, but they are our only remedy.

Recycling project makes sense

One of the cheaper, more practical proposals to go before the CGC Finance Committee is the ECOS recycling project. The statewide group, which was founded in Chapel Hill, is requesting \$715 for the construction of 17 wooden dumpsters to be placed near most of the campus dormitories. A limited recycling project is in effect right now, and ECOS predicts that an estimated three tons of waste paper will be collected weekly.

The paper that is collected during the year may be sold for about \$1,800 in Durham, thus providing about \$1,230 for

recycling salaries and for future ECOS activities. The \$715 that is being requested today will thus establish a continuing, self-sufficient business which is for the benefit of the entire community.

The DTH naturally supports recycling projects in general since we print 15,000 copies of this newspaper daily, all of which can be re-used. We especially support this particular project because of its efficiency and common sense. Every week that three tons of paper is collected, 51 trees will be saved.

Paul Price

The long road to 'Justice'

Marcus Williams and I were on the proverbial road; headed for a meeting with the State Attorney General in Raleigh. And like all good roads, Highway 54 played its part: steaming up images of what the past road had been cluttered with me and the rest of the Student Legal Assistance Committee. Debris. The damndest kind of frustrations.

Telling the distraught woman that, no, we can't tell you how to go about getting a divorce because we're not lawyers and can't give legal advice (and yet knowing divorce proceedings well).

Telling the guy that, sure we're sorry you've been ripped off by your landlord and, yeah, we know you'll lose money if you take him to court, but we've no funds to help you with (and the hundred others like him).

Telling pissed off students that, yep, we could probably take the town government to court for letting gas stations do the preferential customer trick, but how we

gonna pay the lawyer?

Trying to get research done but infrequently finding the requisite time for an over-worked, small (7 members) committee that mans a desk 25-30 hours a week.

Reading a letter to the Editor from the Legal Services Coordinator chiding S.L.A.C. for negligence, when in fact the negligence was his own (for failing to check out his "facts" which were erroneous assumptions).

Writing a point by point rebuttal to the letter and submitting it to the old DTH only to be given in return, weeks later, "what letter? I never saw a letter. Hey, X, you seen a letter?"

Debris. Frustrations. But that lurked in the rearview mirror. Marcus and I were driving forward—to a rendezvous with the Head Honcho Lawman. To have that mystifying web of legalities torn apart. To know it nice and clear: how to expand legal

aid without stepping on the giant juridical toe.

The two-hour meeting produced many how-not-to's. Direct fundings from C.G.C. for the hiring of lawyers was out. Through a curious twist of semantics, C.G.C. is considered part of the state government apparatus. N.C. statute 147-17 reads "No...institution...of the state shall employ any counsel."

Moreover, even if C.G.C. is not involved, student fees cannot be applied toward the hiring of lawyers. Student fees, through an extremely odd use of logic, are considered "public funds"; and public funds cannot be used for individual or "class" legal problems. So even if we students choose through a referendum to give a portion of our fees to a legal aid program, it can't be done.

Quandaries. And S.L.A.C. is back where it started. No way to give legal advice on a day to day basis. No way to hire lawyers to take student related cases to court.

Or is that so? It was not at all clear that the A.G. office's opinion on public funding was anything more than an opinion. Our view is that money merely being transferred by the University from willing students to a student non profit Legal Aid Corporation does not merit the label "public funds." The point can and will be contested. So there is a good chance to do something about the legal plights of students. But there is a lot of work to be done. If you want students to get some teeth in this legal system of ours, or even if you just wish there was somewhere you could go to get quick, free, authoritative legal advice on your traffic ticket, or the terms of your contract, or your divorce—then come help us. Short of that, give us your support when the issue becomes a subject of campus discussion.

Justice, ostensibly is for everyone; and we, students, are just going to have to dig out our share. That's where S.L.A.C.'s and Student Government's road leads.

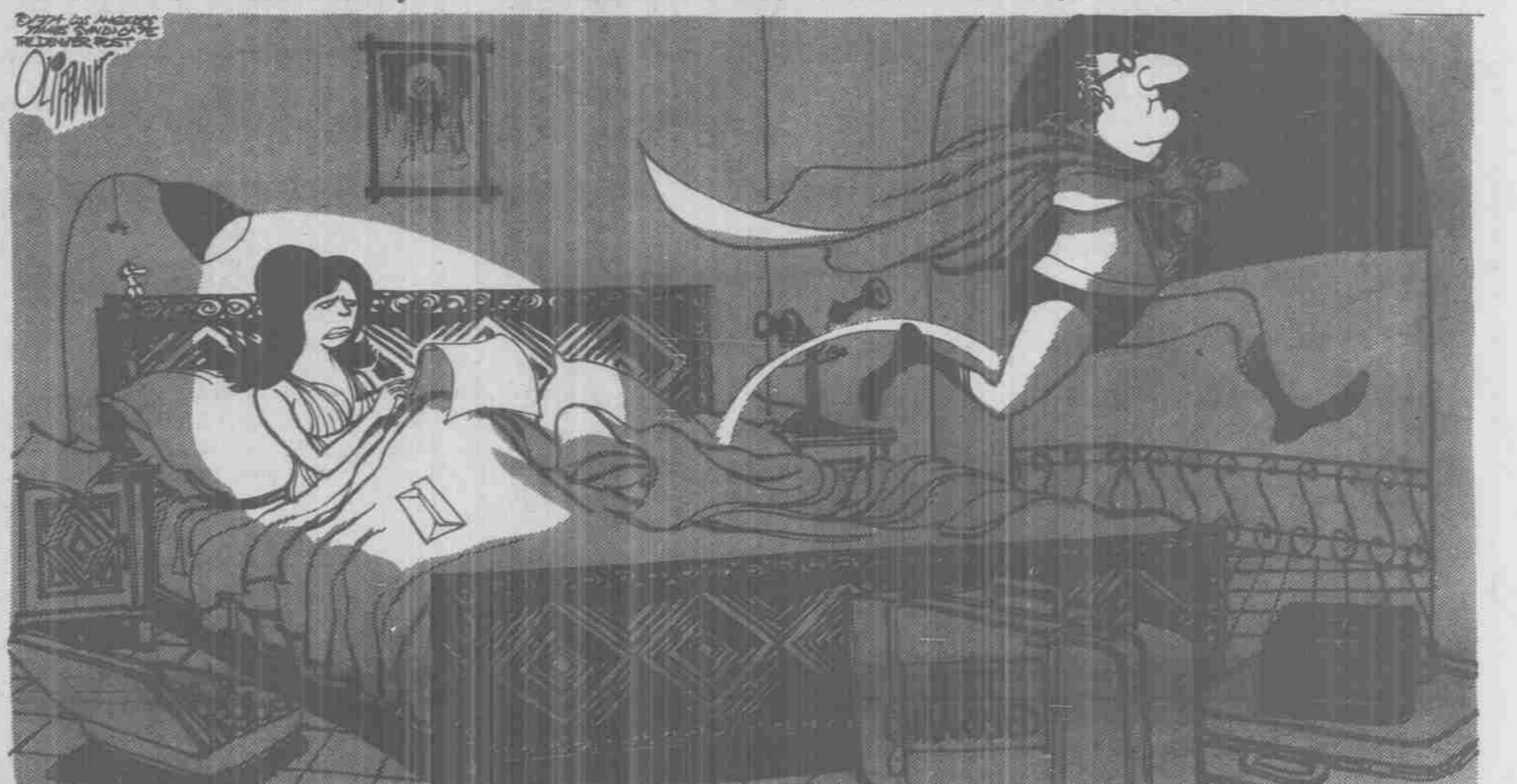
Call 933-5101 or come by Suite C if you want an appointment to be interviewed for S.L.A.C. membership.

The Daily Tar Heel

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'DEAR ANN LANDERS. EVERY TIME THE PHONE RINGS, MY HUSBAND . . .'

Letters to the editor

Kitchen strikes out at plate

To the editors:

I noticed the new "B" sanitation rating in the Granville Towers cafeteria last Friday, before a visiting friend and myself ate supper there. This meal was the only one we had together before the weekend, which we spent listening to "Frog Serenade" with the windows open, never venturing out of sprinting distance from the bathroom.

After two grueling days I decided to raise a stink about it. The city health inspector wouldn't say why exactly Granville rated only 87 per cent sanitation. I talked with Granville food services manager Mark Moldenhauer, who expressed his dissatisfaction with the new rating, and attributed it to a dishwashing machine that broke down the day of the inspection (Friday). He couldn't specify when the replacement parts would arrive, but until they do I suggest that Granville residents watch what they eat—with a microscope.

Lewis Tager
1102 Granville

Aspiring artists nix each other

To the editors:

God, the childishness of it all. Last Tuesday evening, I was walking through the pit when I noticed a friend painting one side of the cube. She was publicizing a Symposium event that was taking place the following night, i.e. Wednesday. I picked up a brush and began to help her.

Suddenly a shadow fell on my shoulder, and I noticed a fairly pissed-off individual looking at me, who said words to the effect of "Hey man, you painted over my sign." It turned out that my friend and I had indeed painted over a sign publicizing a United Farm Workers Lettuce Rally which was to take place Friday.

Now I admit that it is usually not the done thing to paint over someone's cube art if the event has not taken place. But the lettuce people's sign had been up for seven days, Tuesday to Tuesday, before we painted it over. They had already had seven days publicity, and would have occupied one quarter of the cube for ten whole days if they had had their way.

I argued this point with several different lettuce people during the course of my labor. They all had a self-righteous gleam of injured pride in their eyes.

Now, they may well have had a point, and their anger was, to some extent, justified. I

half expected to see that side of the cube occupied by United Farm Workers publicity this morning.

But no. When I came through the pit Wednesday morning I saw that our Symposium publicity, telling people of an event to take place Wednesday night, had indeed been painted over. But NOTHING was in its place.

I have absolutely no proof that the lettuce people were responsible, but if they were, they are a) a bit childishly vindictive for painting it over, though possibly justified; we did paint over their sign; b) a bunch of PUSSIES for not putting their own publicity back up.

This way, neither the Symposium nor the UFW rally gets any benefit.

If the lettuce people were not responsible, my apologies to them. Maybe the Symbionese Liberation Army did it.

Adrian Scott

Interest lacking in Christianity

To the editors:

Last Thursday morning, as a volunteer participant in Christian Emphasis Week, I helped hand out copies of an article entitled "The Resurrection of Jesus Christ." The reactions I encountered varied. Most people took the article without comment; some expressed ridicule; some, even friends, were repulsed and disgusted. In short, I met an overwhelming response of disinterest.

It seems completely incongruous to me that students who will invest \$8-10,000 and four years of their lives to be educated in a liberal, progressive university, demanding that this education include exposure to many widely varying philosophies and ideas, will also refuse to spend five minutes of their time to read a simple presentation of the very crux

The Daily Tar Heel welcomes the expression of all points of view through the letters to the editor. Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors. This newspaper reserves the right to edit all letters for libelous statements and good taste.

Letters should be limited to 300 words and must include the name, address and phone number of the writer. Type letters on a 60-space line and address them to Editor, The Daily Tar Heel, in care of the Student Union.

of the Christian faith, the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

To say that Christianity is bunk solely on the basis of hearsay, subjective opinion and personal prejudices is to deny the central process of education—objective investigation of the facts. To take pride in being open-minded, well-read or even educated without seriously investigating the claims of history's most controversial personality is merely self-deception.

Christianity is not a mystic cult reserved for those who choose to bury their heads in the sands of naivete. It is objective, historical, testable, provable. Consider the examples of Oxford and Cambridge scholar C.S. Lewis, poet T. S. Eliot, British philosopher Cyril Joad, Harvard professor Clifford Moore, Yale professor William Phelps—men respected for their scholarship, yet orthodox in their Christian belief, men who merely examined the facts and came to their own conclusions.

The rational evidence is there. You can believe or scoff, procrastinate or rationalize. But you can't ignore it. The goals of liberal education demand a hearing for all alternatives. Anything less is intellectual dishonesty.

Sandra Millers
Junior, Journalism

Student advises letters to D.C.

To the editors:

Including papers, tests, and classroom and reading notes, the average undergraduate puts about 5,000 words a week on paper. The purpose of this letter is to suggest that, in the midst of an extremely serious political crisis involving presidential impeachment, it would be appropriate for college students to divert a few of these words in the direction of Washington, D.C.

This is easier to do than is commonly supposed. Anyone in the White House can be reached by an address that includes simply their names, and Washington, D.C. 20500. Any senator can be reached by a letter or post card that includes the name, and Washington D.C. 20510. The ZIP Code that will reach any representative is Washington, D.C., 20515.

20500, 20510, 20515. This is the code for participating in the democratic process at a time when every voice should be heard.

Charles Bracelen Flood
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