

Is minimum wage way too little?

BY CHRIS BODNAR

OTTAWA (CUP) — Minimum wages should be set at the poverty line, says a new study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

The report argues that setting minimum wages at the poverty line would ensure low-income earners could provide for themselves.

And the report says that contrary to popular belief, students are not the hardest hit by low minimum wages.

It says 61 percent of people in Canada working for minimum wage are adults.

As well, 64 percent of these low-wage earners are women, according to the study.

David Green, co-author of the report and a University of British Columbia economics professor, says while 50 percent of those on minimum wage are students, the effects of raising minimum wage will be most positive for two-parent families.

As well, Green said it is not necessarily true that increasing the minimum wage leads to layoffs.

"The rise in minimum wage does cause some lay-offs, but it's not gigantic," he said. "But any time this gets into the public discourse, there's this cry from the retail sector saying 'we're going to have to lay off all these people.' It's practically apocalyptic."

Rather, Green says when all competitors face the same hikes, workers have more disposable

income and everyone competes on an even ground.

"The net outcome on effects on employment is small, and in fact one of our main conclusions is that minimum wage is a big player in employment trends," he said.

But others don't agree with the CCPA's assessment.

Michael Walker, executive director of the right-wing Fraser Institute, says minimum wage actually puts most low-income employees at a disadvantage in finding work.

By requiring employers to pay a certain income, says Walker, people like the disabled are less likely to find work because they are not worth paying a high minimum wage.

He says people will become employed when they provide a value to their employer.

The rest of those on minimum wage have their own reasons for being low wage-earners, says Walker.

"These are either young people or people returning to the labour force are in those jobs temporarily or by choice," said Walker.

"Some of them will choose to be in those jobs because they don't want to make a full-time commitment. They only want something to do for a couple of hours a day until their husbands come back."

Instead, Walker says those on minimum wage could apply for government certificates to upgrade

their skills in private institutions.

These would be payable when they get a higher-paying job.

"In effect put a bounty on the heads of the people in these low-paying jobs so someone has the incentive to help them," he said.

Meanwhile, Green cautions against focusing too greatly on minimum wage as a single poverty issue.

He suggests using the

minimum wage as a tool to combat poverty along with other programs, such as Employment Insurance, child tax benefits and job creation initiatives.

"One thing we have to take a pretty hard look at is Employment Insurance," said Green. "We haven't come to grips with this group of people who just aren't getting stable employment like they used to."

Others studying employment and poverty issues seem to

agree.

Trish Harrison, the communication coordinator with the Centre for Social Justice in Toronto, says the gap between the rich and the poor is increasing, largely because of wage inequity.

"What is the government doing about it?" said Harrison. "At least make sure people are earning a livable income. And how about a maximum wage for the top corporate CEOs? Pay equity should be enforced."

University of Guelph students camping out

Students forced to find temporary residence

BY STEPHEN WICARY

GUELPH (CUP) — The housing situation for students at the University of Guelph is dismal.

Residence halls are filled to capacity and off-campus accommodation is extremely scarce.

In response, the university's Student Housing services is offering students without housing temporary crash space in the form of mattresses on the floors of lounges.

Faculty and staff have also been encouraged to offer any extra beds or couches to students while they search for permanent residence.

Despite these efforts, a student group has pitched tents on campus in conjunction with Guelph's Central Student Association.

"We wanted to set-up a safe communal environment for people

in transition or for people who do not have a place outright," said Kyle Patton, CSA spokesperson and Tent City organizer.

"Certainly people can stay with friends on couches or floors, but that leaves feeling isolated and thinking that they are alone in this shitty situation."

According to the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Commission, the vacancy rate in Guelph in 1998 was 1.6 percent — one of the worst in Southwestern Ontario.

Paul Kraehling, of the City of Guelph's Planning and Development Office, said a rate of 3 percent is ideal.

"That's the rate at which we find an acceptable availability of units and competitive rental rates," he said.

Another factor contributing to the problem is increased enrolment at the university. Approximately 400 hundred additional students were admitted

to Guelph last year, and there are plans to keep increasing that number.

To help accommodate the influx of students the university plans to build a new 500-bed residence. It is scheduled to be operational by September 2001 and will be solely available to returning students.

Josh Shook, CSA local affairs commissioner, is pleased the university is taking action and building more permanent spaces for students, but questions their timing.

"They upped enrolment last year but won't have a new residence on-line until September 2001?" he said. "They are letting additional students in now, and building residences for them three years later? That just doesn't work."

Meanwhile, the university has expanded its current residence space nearly to capacity.

THE GAZETTE
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Man arrested after following woman

On Labour Day weekend, a man followed a woman in to a bathroom in the Life Sciences centre. He was arrested after the incident. The woman, a graduate student, said she saw the man staring at her as she went into the washroom. She screamed and he ran next door into men's washroom where he was arrested. The woman had called the campus police. The man told police he followed the woman because he liked her. He has been sent to the Nova Scotia Hospital for psychiatric assessment. The Chief of security, Sandy MacDonald said flashers are a common occurrence around campus. He says theft is a problem as well.

Concordia grad wants to be Mistress of Arts

A woman who is graduating from Concordia University with a Masters of Arts wants "Mistress of Arts" on her diploma.

Carolyn Gammon said the use of "master" is sexist. She even made a suggestion of using Spinster of Arts. Gammon said she wants her work to be reflected in her degree. Females have the right to be represented by the degrees they earn at any university, she said.

Gammon missed her graduation in May until the university makes a decision. The ministry in Quebec would have to approve the change which would then apply to all universities.

Gammon said she didn't mind waiting, but thinks the name change should be a priority. To wait for a decision is sexist in itself, she said. Gammon hopes other female students who see the necessity of the name change will come forward.

VP External comes home

Tom Digby, the DSU VP External has been reincarnated as a Dalhousie student. He left for Queen's University to study law but came back to Halifax three days after leaving.

Digby resigned as VP External to go to law school. He was second on the waiting list for Dalhousie law school and was attend. The spot for VP External is still open but so far Digby is the only candidate. The election will take place on September 26.

DSU president Dave Shannon is the acting VP External until after the election. Shannon said there will be total fairness in this election process. The main issues for VP External this year are daycare, Via Rail budget cuts, the National Week of Action, and tuition fee increases.

U of T eyes business school in England

Deans in the business schools at the University of Toronto and the University of British Columbia are trying to make a deal with Toronto businessman Sam Blyth for a school in London.

Blyth said he is prepared to fork out \$20 million for the project. Blyth's company is ready to buy the land and start building the school.

This is no new deal for Blyth. His company runs a school in southern France. That school is in affiliation with Laurentian University. He describes his company's involvement as being like a landlord. The academic side to the school will be left to the University of Toronto and the University of British Columbia.

Students will pay Canadian tuition fees but travelling and housing will cost extra.

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