

For students

'Below minimum wage okay'

WASHINGTON (Chronicle-CUP) — In a move attacked as "unjust" and "callous", the US Office of Education has decided to allow some 80 colleges and universities to hire students at below the US national minimum wage.

The students would be hired under the College Work-Study Program, which assigns students on-campus jobs to help them pay for their education. The program is 80% subsidized by the US government.

The base salary for the program is normally the US minimum wage, \$2.65/hour. However, the Office has approved waivers for some 80 public universities to allow them to lower their wage scales for the program.

The justification for the lowering is a 1976 US Supreme Court decision which made government employers, such as public universities, no longer subject to the federal minimum wage. As a result, these 80 universities that now pay sub-minimum to some of their part-time employees have received waivers to lower their wages under the program.

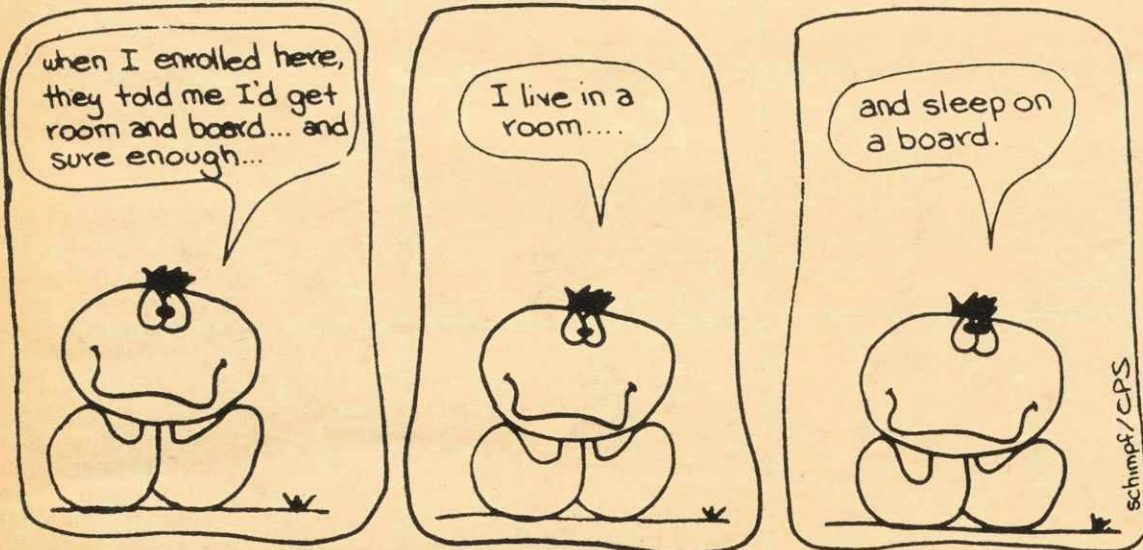
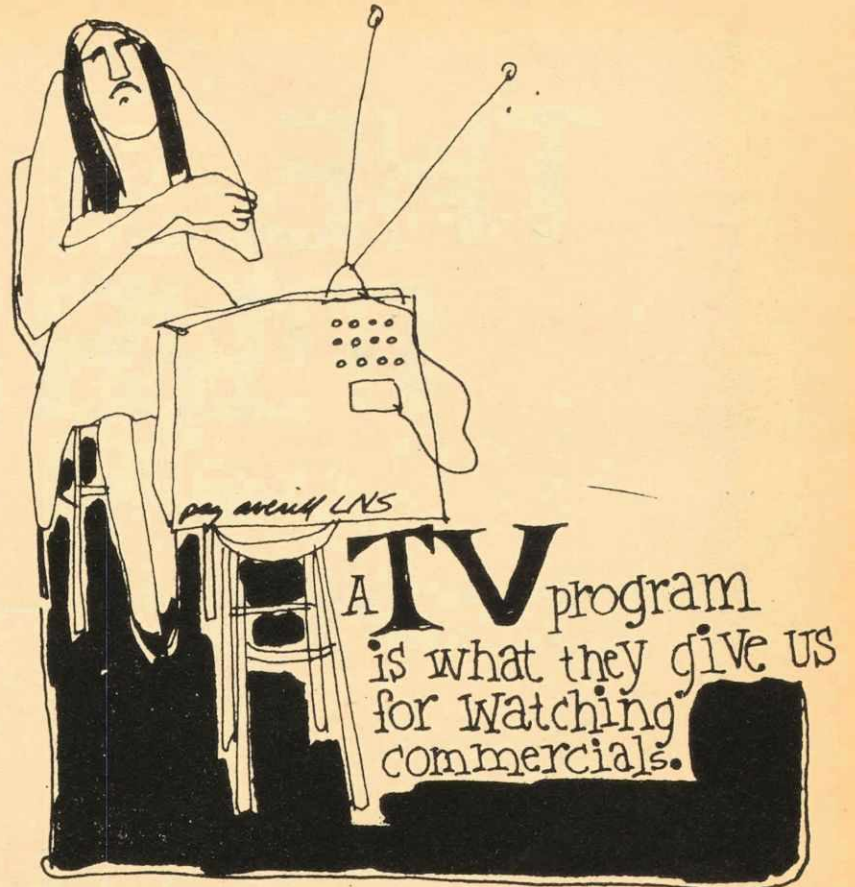
Department of Labour officials estimate about 800 private institutions will also be paying sub-minimum wages to students under the program and to regular employees by the end of this year.

These institutions can gain exemptions by applying to the Department of Labour. If they

gain a waiver from that department, the Office of Education will automatically provide a similar waiver for the College Work-Study Program.

The most recent exemption was given to the Oregon State higher education system, which was allowed to pay students under the program 15% below the minimum wage. That exemption was attacked as a "deliberate" depression of student wages to save money by a coalition of the US National Student Association and National Student Lobby.

The students contended the situation would "only result in financial hardship for students who depend on their work-study jobs for support through college".




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