

## In praise of Compass and the Living Wage Commission

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Many in business deny that there is any morality in taxation.

They go further: they claim there is no morality in markets. They quote Adam Smith and his invisible hand in support of their contention not realising that his 'Wealth of Nations' in which this idea made a very small appearance was itself but a footnote to his more important '[Theory of Moral Sentiments](#)'. In other words they are wrong.

The [Living Wage Commission, founded by Compass](#) under the leadership of Neal Lawson, and funded by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust who also fund part of my work, challenges this perception that there is no morality in markets. It is quite clear that low pay cannot be morally justified, most especially when it is used to help generate large profits that are little taxed and are used to fuel inequality.

I warmly welcome this Commission. And I cannot say better than the Observer did this morning in an editorial on the issue:

*There are strong economic reasons for a living wage. And there are even stronger moral ones. It is unjust that workers at the bottom of this country's pay scale suffer so egregiously while executives, CEOs and shareholders help themselves to a disproportionate share of the spoils.*

*These spoils are often built on the back of the lowest paid workers. This is unjust and unfair. And, ultimately, that unfairness will build tensions and frictions that will become unbearable. A strong and healthy society is one where everyone feels appreciated and fairly remunerated. A living wage would benefit us all in creating a stronger and happier nation.*

I wish the Commission well in its essential work.