

The hideousness of right wing economics

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There was what many people might think a hideous article in the Financial Times over the weekend. It had the title '[Raising the minimum wage is the wrong way to deal with low pay](#)'. I have [already discussed some aspects of this issue this morning](#) so I will not do so again here. What I want to do is highlight the suggestion made in the article that the solution to the problem of low pay is, at least in part, in the author's opinion, better education. However, they went on to say:

We do not have to educate everybody. It would be enough if a portion of the lowest-paid employees gained new skills. These newly proficient workers would gain directly, through higher wages and better employment prospects. But the people left behind would benefit indirectly, too. There would, after all, be fewer of them — and, facing less competition, each would command a higher wage.

This is a deeply telling and troubling paragraph in its own right.

First, note that there is a decision to be made to train some and not others in society. Who is to make that decision, I wonder? Is it to be based on aptitude at a very young age? Are we to then choose who will and will not win in a wage economy soon after infancy? And who will make that decision? Right wingers normally say the state should not choose winners and losers and that the market should? What is the agency to be in this case? Will it be ability to pay? Everything else in this logic is about money, after all?

Second, note that the authors assume a neat easy relationship between training and reward. Would they like to tell all new graduates of this link? It is naive in the extreme to think it exists.

But most of all what is repugnant about this thinking is the commodification of us as people that it implies. We are to be treated as mere factors of production fitting into the grand scheme of things in which some will be rewarded well and others not nearly so much. With out fate apparently ordained or chosen for us. There is a natural supremacist argument lurking just below the surface in such claims. They don't even seek to pretend otherwise, suggesting, quite openly that some should be 'left behind'.

Down this route is fascism, I think. This is not economics. This is a prescription for social engineering for an apparently pre-destined elite already in existence who will bestow the favour of training on others as they see fit so long as they fit into the ruling decision makers' scheme of things. I have rarely read something so hideous in a mainstream paper.