

139 Views | 3 CrossRef citations to date | 0 Altmetric

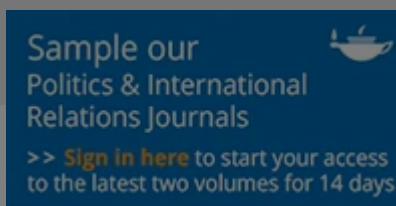
Original Articles

Brothers and Breadwinners: Legislating Living Wages in the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938

Ellen Mutari

Pages 129-148 | Published online: 18 Feb 2007

Cite this article <https://doi.org/10.1080/00346760410001684415>



Full Article Figures & data References Citations Metrics

Reprints & Permissions

Read this article

Abstract

Attention to the contested nature of masculinity during the period of economic crisis in the 1930s. The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) reveal

We Care About Your Privacy

We and our 842 partners store and/or access information on a device, such as unique IDs in cookies to process personal data. You may accept or manage your choices by clicking below, including your right to object where legitimate interest is used, or at any time in the privacy policy page. These choices will be signaled to our partners and will not affect browsing data. [Privacy Policy](#)

We and our partners process data to provide:

Use precise geolocation data. Actively scan device characteristics for identification. Store and/or access information on a device. Personalised advertising and content, advertising and content measurement, audience research and services development.

[List of Partners \(vendors\)](#)

I Accept

Essential Only

Show Purpose

Advocates responded by defining a multiplicity of living wages corresponding with different living standards, as well as a multiplicity of strategies for achieving them.

Keywords: minimum wage living wage New Deal gender masculinity economic policy

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The research for this article was supported by a William Waters Grant from the Association for Social Economics and a Research and Professional Development Grant from Richard Stockton College. Some of the research was conducted while doing collaborative research with Deborah M. Figart and Marilyn Power; I thank them for their ideas and inspiration. I am also grateful for the helpful comments of two anonymous referees for this journal. I remain, however, responsible for any errors or omissions.

Notes

The term “race-ethnicity” is used to express the historically contingent process of defining both racial and ethnic categories. Groups defined as racially distinct in one historical time and place may be considered ethnically distinct elsewhere.

Stabile ([1997](#)) notes that this social economic view of wages traces back to the Scholastics and influenced classical political economists such as Adam Smith.

Theda Skocpol (1992) argues that the New Deal was a response to the economic crisis of the 1930s, and that the New Deal were another example of the state's response to economic crisis.

For in-depth discussion of the New Deal's impact on commerce, see Mettler (2002).

The women's movement of the 1920s and 1930s had long opposed the idea of gender neutrality in the workplace. Their criteria for a “wage” was based on the gender-neutral principle of the National Labor Relations Act, which was a commitment of

Labor that also advocated protective legislation, also worked behind the scenes to ensure passage.

Responding to their assertions, the representative from the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees documented the low wages of employees in the north as well as the south and contested the designation of track men and section men as unskilled labourers (U.S. Congress [1937](#): 1149-1161).

See Power ([1999](#)) and Prasch and Seth ([1999](#)) for discussion of the relationship between productivity, efficiency, and wage levels in the writings of early twentieth-century minimum wage advocates.

Ryan published A Living Wage: Its Ethical and Economic Aspects in 1906. In his second book on the topic, Distributive Justice, he asserted that “... the ethical value of labor is always equivalent to at least a living wage, and the employer is morally bound to give this much remuneration” (Ryan [1996](#) [1916]: 119).

Very few African Americans worked in the southern textile and other manufacturing plants until after World War II.

As discussed above, this was a partially unionized industry in which the union leadership wanted nonunion employers to be legislatively mandated to raise wages in order to protect unionized employees.

The president of a Houston, Texas, tool company also defended unequal wages by race because “there are certain tasks that are colored, and there are certain tasks that are white,” (U.S. Congress [1937](#): 1150-1151).



Information for

Authors

R&D professionals

Editors

Librarians

Societies

Opportunities

Reprints and e-prints

Advertising solutions

Accelerated publication

Corporate access solutions

Open access

Overview

Open journals

Open Select

Dove Medical Press

F1000Research

Help and information

Help and contact

Newsroom

All journals

Books

Keep up to date

Register to receive personalised research and resources by email



Sign me up



Copyright © 2024 Informa UK Limited [Privacy policy](#) [Cookies](#) [Terms & conditions](#)



Taylor & Francis Group
an informa business

Accessibility



Registered
5 Howick Place

