

Work is Better for Kids than School

Child labor laws sound sensible but they are not.

Places poor enough to need children to work will have child labor whether governments ban it or not.

If banned, it will be unenforceable if it's widespread, or if enforced, will drive child labor to far worse activities than if it were legal.

Unfortunately, you cannot legislate away scarcity.

Places that do not need children to work in harsh conditions will not have them do so. Laws banning it do not bring this about.

But let's be clearer about the idea of child labor. It's very much alive today, even in countries wealthy enough to not need kids laboring.

In the US, children are forced to labor at a desk in cinder block rooms for 13 years. It is mandatory and very difficult to escape. They have no choice over the work or the schedule. They earn no pay. They gain few skills that are valuable later in life. They are shamed and punished if they don't enjoy it, aren't good at it, or slack.

These same kids are prohibited from voluntarily offering to work for pay. They can't go hang around a greenhouse and ask to make a few bucks an hour watering plants. Even if they love plants and learn a ton and the owner would like to have them. It is illegal for them to earn money working at their parents business, or selling YouTube editing services to small companies.

Some still find loopholes and ways to do some kinds of work without getting caught. But the majority of the most interesting and valuable kinds of work are way too legally dubious for companies to mess around paying young people. And minimum wage laws price them out of even the simplest roles.

No wonder young people emerge from colleges in their mid-twenties and enter the workforce with little skill and even less idea what the market values. They've been forced out of it for more than 20 years.

Children love to play. And they love to work on goals and things they value. They love being around adults and learning from them. They love helping. They love earning money and the confidence and independence that comes with it.

Instead they are raised away from the free market in a low value master-slave setting and

banned from breaking free.

No wonder most people have such an unhealthy relationship to work and wages and commerce and companies.

More freedom to work and less coerced labor in school would be awesome for everyone.