

Poor Bashing in the BC Liberals' Online Store

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Friday, April 24, 2009

<http://politicsrespun.org/2009/04/poor-bashing-in-the-bc-liberals-online-store/>

I was so annoyed listening to Gordon Campbell pull a Sarah Palin [I hear your question, but I think I'll just talk about this instead] on the leaders debate on CKNW this morning when asked about poverty reduction strategies. He talked about how he loves to help create high paying jobs and that the average wage in BC is \$22/hour.



Let's do some simple arithmetic. [The global GDP is estimated](#) at around US\$69 trillion. The [world population today](#) is around 6.7 billion. That means the average annual income of everyone in the world is around US\$10,000! Goodbye poverty, hurray for us! Oh wait, averages can be the devil's pool cue crashed over the back of the homeless fellow outside the pool hall on a rainy winter night.

This is what I think of every time Gordon Campbell quotes the average BC wage. Anyone who finds solace in it needs to re-think how insidious averages can be and ask themselves if they wish to be inadvertently complicit in poor bashing.

So when I cruised by the BC Liberal party's online fundraising merchandising store, I examined the prices of the trinkets that, with Campbell's love of globalized trade and the race to the bottom of production, I assume are made in Chinese sweatshops.

\$22/hour is the average wage in BC? Hmm, [that would buy you a mousepad](#) promoting the Liberals' strong BC. But it would take you longer because I'm sure Campbell is talking about \$22 as a gross wage, so that after deductions it would take far more than one hour of work to buy that mousepad.



And [what about a toque](#) to keep your homeless head warm while promoting the BC Liberal brand? Let's not assume that none of the homeless have jobs, because many do and are still homeless. \$17.50 is the price. that would take an \$8/hour minimum wage worker around 2 hours and 12 minutes to earn it.

[An apron for those summer barbeques](#)? \$20 or 2.5 hours of pretax minimum wage work or even more, 3.3 hours, for the victimized trainee/new workers making \$6/hour.

But if you really want to save up for the [eco-friendly women's plasma jacket](#), perhaps by foregoing protein for all 3 meals each day next week or maybe skipping lunches altogether, \$8/hour workers would have to toil for 24.4 hours.



So as we're watching economic stimulus packages devolve into corporate welfare programs, we should applaud the NDP and their commitment to raising the minimum wage to \$10/hour. Minimum wage workers spend their wages in their communities to create a multiplier effect that recycles wealth and improves the economy from the ground up. The neoLiberal party never talks about this kind of stimulus because their constituency is not the poorest 95% of the British Columbians, let alone the economically destitute and those barely hanging on, living one pay cheque away from the streets.

But then, why would the BC neoLiberal party care about raising the minimum wage, since the poor wouldn't buy their \$22 mousepads anyway.