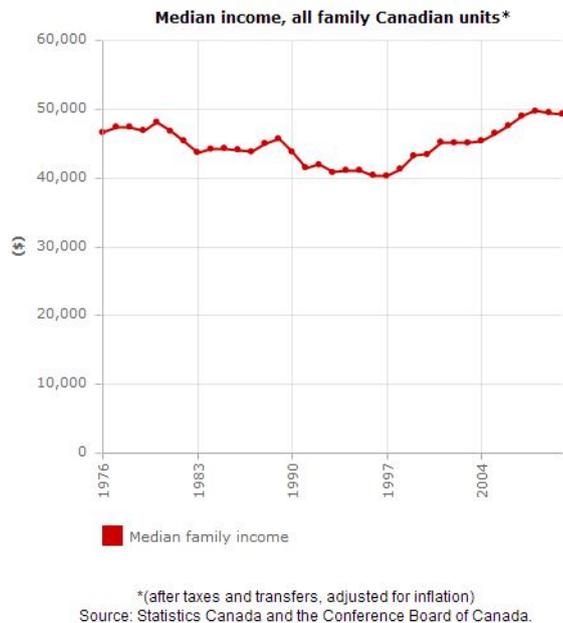


Yes, Your Parents' Standard of Living Was Better

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Tuesday, March 18, 2014

<https://politicsrespun.org/2014/03/yes-your-parents-standard-of-living-was-better/>



Ugh. We're so much poorer than our parents!

Yes, your parents' standard of living was better, so what are you going to do about it?

When I was growing up in the 1970s, most [maybe 80%?] of my friends had a mom who stayed home and didn't work.

Over the last 40 years the proportion of single income households seems to have flipped so that it seems to be only about 20%.

So what's wrong with this graph over there?

There's a huge increase in the number of families with more than one income source in the last 40 years, but median family income has gone up less than 10%. [Median just means that 50% of the population makes more than that around and 50% makes less.]

If this freaks you out as much as it freaks me out, think about the implications:

1. Even though this chart adjusts for inflation, families are earning just barely more than they did 40 years ago, which means that all the extra hundreds and thousands of hours of work that family members put in every year **HAVE DONE NOTHING** to significantly improve our families' standard of living.

2. All the productivity gains that workers have made in our society have led to increased wealth in society. That wealth has led to less than a 10% increase in median family income DESPITE the hundreds and thousands of hours of extra work family members put in every year.
3. Who is pocketing the value from all that extra work? It's not workers. That would be the rich, the 1%, the capitalist class..however you want to describe it.
4. And "[whereas Conservatives are focusing more on 'Hey, look, net worth is going up,'](#)" we need to remember that net worth pays attention to assets, not annual income. Since the poor and middle class are worth less and less as real family incomes decline and consumer debt increase, the rich are hoarding more wealth. PLUS, if net worth is going up nationally, that means the rich are hoarding EVEN MORE to offset the declines in net worth from poorer Canadians.
5. But what's also telling is that the analysis of the above graph on [the CBC webpage](#) fails to strongly point out that there has been this drastic increase the number of families with more income sources. A better comment here about that shift would have helped add the most significant weight to the chart and how it shows massively increasing income disparity. Instead, it was just this, which is too bad:

Canadians who consider themselves middle class have been saying they feel stretched economically, and he says "that's what the evidence shows." Real incomes have been rising, but very slowly, "and certainly very slowly relative to the generation I grew up in." ... But those incomes have been going up at a cost, he says, "of more people having to spend more time earning their income."

The rich ARE getting richer and the poor--us!--ARE getting poorer.

This, by the way, was what the Occupy Movement was/is all about.

This is why I like workplace democracy, and [unions](#), and [co-ops](#), and [workers who get climate breakdown](#), and [living wage campaigns](#) and [poverty reduction strategies](#) and all those other things that help address the massive rip-off that the rich are exacting from us. They're winning, and [they are starting to whine](#) about us pointing that out.

And if you wonder why you feel so tired, it's not because you are weak or lazy or stupid. It's because as a society we are working harder for less than 10% more real income than our parents did. It's a rip-off, alright.

And if you think that's fair, vote for the 1% and don't come back to this website.