



South Australian Debating Association Inc

Intermediate B, Round 5

“That we regret the norm that minors should get paid jobs”

1. Type of Topic

This is a regret, or counterfactual topic. The best interpretation of these topics is “That the world would have been better if it was not normal for minors (i.e. individuals under the age of 18) to obtain paid employment”. This is unlike a normative (model) topic, in which both teams can propose a model describing exactly what a world where minors don’t normally obtain paid jobs looks like. Instead, both teams should use a reasoned argument to illustrate what the world would most likely look like if minors didn’t get paid jobs, and compare this to the world we currently live in.

This argument is called a “counterfactual”. A counterfactual argument requires reasoning that shows why a particular outcome is likely; for instance, the affirmative team’s “counterfactual” might be that in a world where minors didn’t get paid jobs, the unemployment rate would be lower. However, to prove this, it is important for them to provide a clear logical mechanism that explains why minors not having paid jobs would lead to such an outcome.

2. Background / Context

A norm is a behaviour that is usually partaken in by the majority of society. For example, it is the norm to line up behind others at a store. This debate is asking you to consider a different norm, that of minors getting paid jobs. It is very common for individuals under the age of 18 to obtain paid jobs, especially at retail and fast food businesses.

The reasons that minors seek to obtain jobs are varied. Some may wish to have more spending money, some might be trying to help support their family, some might simply be trying to gain experience that makes them more employable later in life. Whatever the reason, minors are subject to different working conditions than adults. For example, the minimum wage for a minor is less than an adult, which often makes them cheaper to employ. Furthermore, a child of compulsory school age (6-16) cannot be required to work during school hours.

This debate is asking you to consider whether we regret the common practice of minors obtaining paid employment by considering whether the world would be better if this was not the norm.

3. Specific Questions for consideration

When approaching this debate, teams may find it useful to answer the following questions to better understand what is being discussed in this debate, and to help them formulate arguments:

- What does it mean for something to be a norm?
 - Would minors still be able to obtain paid jobs if it were not the norm? If so, in what cases would this be likely to happen?
- What makes minors ideal employees for some businesses? Which businesses generally employ minors? Why do some businesses employ minors and others don't?
 - What does this have to do with the working experience of minors compared to adults?
 - What does it have to do with their education and training?
 - What does it have to do with their wages?
- From a business' perspective, how would most minors not obtaining paid employment impact them? Does it depend on the business?
- How would minors not normally obtaining paid employment affect their education?
- What are working conditions like for minors? Are they better or worse than those for adults?
- What are safe working conditions? Are the working conditions at most businesses that employ minors safe?
- What benefit do minors derive from paid employment? Would they still be able to obtain these benefits without paid employment?
- How does the employment of minors affect other adult workers and adults seeking employment?
- How does the paid employment of minors affect the economy more broadly?
 - Does it affect prices for consumers?
 - Does it affect unemployment?
- How does the paid employment of minors affect their future job prospects? If there is a benefit, could such benefits be gained through other means?

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