Published on *Adam Smith Institute* (http://www.adamsmith.org)

Leave One Direction alone! [1]

Written by **Sam Bowman** [2] | Thursday 18 April 2013

In yesterday's City AM I responded [3] to Vince Cable's condemnation [4] of the boyband One Direction's £25m earnings. The point that Cable missed, I argued, was that income is a reflection of value created for other people:

> Earnings are not a reflection of moral worth, they?re a product of how much other people are willing to pay for your work. If a lot of people are willing to pay you just a little, you can make a lot of money.
>
> To understand how high pay can be fair, the philosopher Robert Nozick suggested a thought experiment. Imagine a society where wealth was distributed equally. Now suppose a great basketball player, like the legendary US player Wilt Chamberlain, comes along. Everyone wants to see Chamberlain play, and his team charges fans an extra 25 cents to see him.
>
> After the first season, 1m people have paid to see Chamberlain?s games. His income for that season is $250,000 ? much more than anyone started off with. Is there an injustice here? Chamberlain is happy and his fans are happy. They could have spent their money on something else, but seeing him added enough value to their lives to be worth that extra 25 cents.
>
> Would anyone say that these earnings were ?grossly immoral?? Adding a little bit of value to a lot of people?s lives is a good thing, and if people are willing to pay for that, good for the Chamberlains of this world. Some may prefer Beethoven to Harry Styles, but One Direction?s fans disagree.

It hasn't propelled me to international pop-stardom, as I'd hoped, but you might still want to read the whole thing [3].

blog comments powered by Disqus [6]

Source URL: http://www.adamsmith.org/blog/economics/leave-one-direction-alone

Links:
[1] http://www.adamsmith.org/blog/economics/leave-one-direction-alone
[2] http://www.adamsmith.org/taxonomy/term/5809
[3] http://www.cityam.com/article/defence-one-direction-why-high-earnings-are-no-reflection-morality
[4] http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/4889001/vince-cable-attacks-one-directions-earnings.html
[5] http://disqus.com/?ref_noscript
[6] http://disqus.com