



The Fight for Fifteen: The Right Wage for a Working America

By David Rolf

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The Fight for Fifteen: The Right Wage for a Working America By David Rolf

The fight for a higher minimum wage has become the biggest national labor story in decades. Beginning in November 2012, strikes by fast food workers spread across the country, landing in Seattle in May 2013. Within a year, Seattle had adopted a \$15 minimum wage—the highest in the United States—without a bloody political battle.

Combining history, economics, and commonsense political wisdom, *The Fight for Fifteen* makes a deeply informed case for a national \$15/hour minimum wage as the only practical solution to reversing America's decades-long slide toward becoming a low-wage nation.

Drawing both on new scholarship and on his extensive practical experiences organizing workers and grappling with inequality across the United States, David Rolf, president of SEIU 775—which waged the successful Seattle campaign—offers an accessible explanation of “middle out” economics, an emerging popular economic theory that suggests that the origins of prosperity in capitalist economies lie with workers and consumers, not investors and employers.

A blueprint for a different and hopeful American future, *The Fight for Fifteen* offers concrete tools, ideas, and inspiration for anyone interested in real change in our lifetimes.

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Editorial Review

Review

In *The Fight for Fifteen*, union organizer David Rolf compiles a compelling history of this recent breath of life from an (only mostly) dead American labor movement, weaving personal narrative and politics into an engrossing story. Most impressive here is the breadth of the history he recounts. While the book focuses around the chapters detailing the fight for a livable wage in SeaTac and Seattle, there is also considerable work done to frame this moment within the historical context of the political battles of the last forty years, viz., the consolidation of neoliberal hegemony. An excellent introduction to recent labor history and especially pertinent to us locally.

-- The Elliot Bay Book Company

Praise for *The Fight For Fifteen*:

"With intellectual rigor and practical wisdom, David Rolf shows why the fight for a \$15-an-hour minimum wage is not just a local battle but a national moral necessity—and a cornerstone of a decent society."

—Robert B. Reich, Chancellor's Professor of Public Policy, University of California, Berkeley

"Anyone interested in fighting for workers and getting results should read David Rolf's new book on the importance of raising the minimum wage. Few people in this country have the on-the-ground perspective and passion that David has when it comes to increasing wages and giving workers and families the tools they need to succeed."

—Senator Patty Murray (D-WA)

"Rolf successfully addresses many arguments against higher minimum wages. [T]he book will appeal to anyone looking to know more about the workings of modern-day labor movements and the stories of their members."

—*Publishers Weekly*

"An expert exploration of a provocative blueprint for rescuing the American middle class through the creation of a new living wage. A savvy inside look at the social movement challenging decades of stark economic decline."

—*Kirkus Reviews*

"David Rolf shows that raising the minimum wage to \$15 is both just and necessary, lest the American dream of middle class prosperity turn into a nightmare of enduring poverty for millions of workers in the bottom half of wage earners."

—David Cay Johnston, bestselling author of *The Fine Print* and *Free Lunch*, and winner of the Pulitzer Prize

"David Rolf has helped put low-wage workers in Seattle at the forefront of a national movement for a \$15 minimum wage; his forward thinking helped paved the way for some of the greatest progress toward addressing our nation's growing income inequality that we've seen in decades."

—Saru Jayaraman, author of *Behind The Kitchen Door*, co-founder, Restaurant Opportunity Centers United

"David Rolf has become the most successful advocate for raising wages in the 21st century. Where others

talk, David leads, and his book is an inside look at a campaign that has the potential to make work pay again.”

—Andy Stern, senior fellow, at Columbia University's Richard Paul Richman Center for Business, Law, and Public Policy; former president of the 2.2 million member SEIU.

“David Rolf's first book is a call to action, reminding us that we define what's possible in politics, and that the future of the economy is at stake. If you're interested in what can actually be done about inequality, read this book.”

—Ai-jen Poo, Director, National Domestic Workers Alliance and author of *The Age of Dignity: Preparing for the Elder Boom in an Aging America*

Praise for David Rolf:

"Over the past fifteen years, no American unionist has organized as many workers, or won them raises as substantial, as Rolf."

—*The American Prospect*

About the Author

David Rolf is the president of SEIU 775, the fastest-growing union in the Northwest. He has led some of the largest organizing efforts since the 1930s, including the successful organization of 75,000 home care aides in Los Angeles. Rolf lives in Seattle.

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