

God, Life and Everything
"My New Currency"

Forget Bitcoin. Say hello to the Erg.

The Erg is my new currency which will sweep the world and make it. Better place to live. Or at least it will amuse me while I think about it.

What is this Erg of which I speak? It gets its name from the Greek word *Ergon* meaning "work." But to really understand, we have to look at the ongoing discussion of the federal minimum wage. People have been earning the same minimum wage for years. At the same time, the cost of living has continued to increase, meaning that their salaries have effectively gone down.

That's nothing new, of course, but it is a real issue, and minimum wage earners have not been able to make a living. They can not live on their full time jobs. In New York, admittedly the most expensive state (thanks to New York City), it takes a minimum wage worker about 136 hours of work each week to pay basic living expenses. But even in the cheapest state in the union, South Dakota, you have to work 64 hours each week to keep a roof over your head and food in your belly. The average across the country is somewhere around 85. (based on National Low Income Housing Coalition figures)

This got me thinking. If we can figure how many hours of work it takes to live on, why not make *that* our standard. Let's make our currency something that isn't based on a random number but on what it takes to live. In my Erg-centric currency, wherever you live, minimum wage is forty Ergs per week - thus an Erg is one fortieth of what it takes to pay the agree-upon basics of life. To put it another way, an Erg is the value of working one hour.

To make myself clear, the minimum wage would always be forty Ergs a week, based on a forty-hour work week. You could work more hours each week, making more ergs for those little extras in life. And, of course, you could get a better-paying job so you can have nicer things. But at minimum wage, forty Ergs, you will not have to depend on public assistance or local food pantries. You won't have to go to the homeless shelter, as so many employed people do.

An Erg would, of course, be broken down to small units - maybe the "nanoerg" or the "ergcent". I don't know. The important thing for me is that the Erg never loses value. It will always be one fortieth of what it takes to make it with the basics.

One of the other things about an Erg is that it would have roughly the same purchasing value in New York City as in South Dakota. Even at \$10.10 per hour - the proposed new minimum wage - a New Yorker is going to struggle while a South Dakotan might make it reasonably well.

Oh, and Ergs would be real currency, none of that digital-only stuff.

Now, I'm sure economists - or other financially-minded folks - could poke all sorts of holes in this scheme. I'm sure it has all sorts of flaws. What system doesn't? But is it really any crazier than a system in which millions work full time yet constantly have to go on public assistance?

I am just playing around with the Erg, of course. But people of faith need to make it their job to figure out ways to allow their neighbors to work humble jobs without going hungry. We have the resources, and we have the moral responsibility.