

Unit 2 short answer

Sociology



Module Sociology It is very difficult to assign a monetary value to human life. While economists quantify human life based on the quality of life, the expected life remaining, and the remaining earning potential of an individual, some disciplines including justice consider human life priceless. Based on money spent during a single life \$ 6 million is statistically justified. However the cost of positive train control is unjustifiable because a total of between 700 and 950 deaths have occurred due to train operations but only 85 were passengers while the rest were trespassers and those who train corridors (Aldrich 335). In 2009 only 3 passengers were killed in train accidents. The Federal Railroad Authority overreacted and introduced a regulation that unnecessarily increased consumer prices. Most train fatalities occur outside the railroad for example among trespassers which is illegal anyway. A Federal study had earlier concluded that the cost of control outweighs the benefits more than 15 times (Asenfelter & Greenstone 15). In my opinion Congress had the options of letting the Federal Railroad Authority run independently. It is important to note that the authority initially dismissed the ideas of regulation citing expense and only reacted after the Metro link incident (Haine 199). I think the Congressional decision was a knee jerk and emotional reaction to an “ old club of boys” not subjective to their authority. The Congress was combative, exhibited personal bias in decision making and ignored several options (White 245). The solutions to the problem need not have gone beyond the railroad staff. Means of effectively controlling and monitoring staff during working hours to prevent issues like the use of cell phones should have been effective enough. My options would include imposing tighter controls of staff at work, banning the carrying and use of cell phones during working hours, placing cameras and

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making surprise inspections. I would have required definite statistics on the actual costs of railroad accidents and their route cause and examine each factor in isolation.

My response would be specific to avoid punishing the entire railroad system. Railroading has a long history of mishaps that had been ignored for over 18 years (Carrol, Archie & Buchholtz 52). Piece meal and immediate measures to punish and prevent reoccurrence would have prevented the passing of a costly law (Guerin & DelPo 339). The Railroad Safety Improvement Act is a mixture of specifics and generalities. The problem lies with the latter. I agree with the regulations controlling train crews at work but disagree with positive train controls that balloon the costs of the implementation of the law. The Act of 2008 was not justified (Wiatrowski 200). I would have advocated for closer monitoring of engineers but would not go to the extent monitoring their cell phones during mandatory rest periods. This decision displayed how the rule making process has ridiculously been reduced to a process lacking in transparency and accountability by democratic governments. The Congress refused to listen to the voices of the stakeholders in the railroad sector (Hseih 113).

This law is the story of Robert Sanchez. Several things could have been done to prevent the disaster starting with proper vetting of Sanchez before employment. He had health issues that were never uncovered until his death, obesity, spent time in jail, complained of a tiring work shift, had several disciplinary issues at work including the use of cell phones, had not fully recovered from the effects a near fatal accident (Usselman 240). Poor supervision by Metrolink and the dysfunctional relationship between it and Connex left a lot of loopholes in the day to day running and management of

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Metrolink (Jennings 235). The first cause is human error, disobeying and ignoring work rules, fatigue, lack of effective supervision, communication failure and ignoring warning signs.

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