

Urth Digest, Vol 57, Issue 38

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 20 May 2009

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/5441>

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David Stockhoff — 20 May 2009, 00:34

below, as briefly as possible ...

Message: 1

Date: Tue, 19 May 2009 18:43:10 -0500

From: "James Wynn" <crushtv at gmail.com>

Subject: Re: (urth) Urth Digest, Vol 57, Issue 31

To: "The Urth Mailing List" <urth at lists.urth.net>

Message-ID: <84EF7CEE69A547A3B2317E899DE09AD7 at eMachinePC>

Content-Type: text/plain; format=flowed; charset="iso-8859-1";
reply-type=response

I said:

"The Devil in a Forest", Wolfe presents the issue moral terms. If I'm benefiting from a service more than my neighbor, and also paying less for that service than my neighbor, why is that less shameful than just going to his door and demanding the money?

Okay. Here are your three options:

David Stackhoff replied:

If you keep thinking in terms of your individual, personal, exclusive benefit, you will never grasp the concept of the public good.

I understand public good. I also understand the true meaning of shared responsibility, and that there is no free lunch.

Let me re-iterate the analogy I offered in the post you responded to:

"Say five citizens get together to fund a new well. Hmmm...they could all pay the same amount to dig it, or they could all pay the same percentage of their wealth, OR....they could vote that Moe here--who also has a lake on his property so he doesn't need the well---will pay for half of it because, after all, he can "afford it". How is that different from a two foxes and a hen voting on what to have for supper?"

Of course, in a community of five this would never happen. The four would be ashamed to force such an arrangement. But --as with Gloin in tDiaF who agreed to rob Phillip so long as Phillip would never know it was him--we do this all the time in the privacy of the voting booth.

I still don't think you get the sense of "public" I am referring to. Your scenario has nothing to do with it. It's an intangible---it's not a direct benefit.

Someone suggested public vs private education as an example, and it's a good one---although sharing of water so that no one goes thirsty would be a good one too, properly handled. When no one dies unnecessarily or goes uneducated, and there are no water riots, everyone benefits, obviously. Imagine a sign over your town that says "___ YEARS SINCE A CIVIL WAR."

A hypothetical town factory owner benefits from public education because he can hire intelligent, educated workers---so he happily pays his share of taxes, and he still gets to smoke his fine cigars and sail his yacht.

Somehow your example gets short-circuited. Where did the part about the lake owner paying more come from? You may as well propose that the tall man eats more apples. It's a non sequitur.

I said:

This is actually is the most fair way. But, that's asking way too much fairness from a society of Fallen human beings. On the other hand, if the poor don't like it, I suppose they could move to Mogadishu.

Yes, in their yachts.

Well, the Boat People of Vietnam were a lot more destitute than the American poor, and somehow managed to pull off something similar.

You're ignoring the fact that most personal wealth in the US is inherited. You're also ignoring racism and classism. And your assumption that the first guy gets more benefit from services is unfounded and unproven. _

I do not believe the first statement is true. I'd like to see the numbers to back it up. I've heard just the opposite. Racism is illegal. I'm not sure how you gauge classism, but I'm sure I've been as much a victim of it as anyone.

As for my assumption, who gets more benefit from a public transportation? The top 1% who pay 22% of federal income taxes? The top 5% who pay 60%? Who benefits the most from emergency room care? Who benefits the most from education subsidies? Who benefits from public shelters, free public schools, and Earned Income Tax Credits?

Racism is illegal?

What?

Classism, in this case, means "Sure, I can find a spot for your boy on my investment bank team."

Who benefits when thousands of people can get into town BY TRAIN to see a basketball game?

The poor? or the team owner?

Think!

I asserted:

David Stockhoff implied that he found the idea increased taxes appealing because he didn't think he'd pay the bulk of them (or any of them?).

I said nothing like that. I said I WANT TO PAY MORE TAXES. I want a bigger, better public "space."

I was drawing from this statement:

"As a result, I will pay more taxes. I want to pay more taxes.
Why? Because it's a deal. Because my city is broke. Because I believe in the public good. Because I'm not rich."

I took that to mean you expected to receive more from "the public space" than the value of the taxes you were paying. Somebody would have to make up that per-person difference. Sorry if I took that wrong.

No. I meant that (even if everyone else earned the same amount and paid the same in taxes) I would still see the benefit of shared space and goods. (By "space" I mean both literal space and figurative or cultural space.) For one thing, there is the economy of scale, as for example when building a rail system, as well as collective bargaining power. How many trains could you build yourself? And it's cheaper than paying for a second car and gas. If I had to pay for everything (everything---think no health insurance) at (free) market rates, my family and I would starve and die.

But, you don't need to pass laws to pay more taxes. Just figure a what percentage of your income you are paying now and add 10%. I've never known a government to turn down money.

J.

James Wynn — 20 May 2009, 01:40 · in reply to David Stockhoff

David Stockhoff: I still don't think you get the sense of "public" I am referring to. Your scenario has nothing to do with it.
It's an intangible---it's not a direct benefit.

How is a water well not a direct benefit?

A hypothetical town factory owner benefits from public education because he can hire intelligent, educated workers

Does he benefit more than the people whose children are getting educated?

---so he happily pays his share of taxes, and he still gets to smoke his fine cigars and sail his yacht.

You're concept of the rich is colored by a preconception of Thurston Howell III. Typically, an owner of a factory risked everything he had to get there and worked 14 hour days for years. He's might be well be strangers by the time he can afford a yacht. All this to employ people who just want to get their checks on Friday and get home to the barbeque.

Someone suggested public vs private education as an example.

Why do you believe that something would not occur unless the government did it? You want to legislate that everyone spend a certain amount on schools? Fine. Why does the government have to do it? In Europe, the money spent on child schooling goes to the child. Why shouldn't a home-schooling parent get the money to stay home, buy school supplies, and send their child to intellectually enriching experiences?

Somehow your example gets short-circuited.
Where did the part about the lake owner paying more come from?

Adam and I were discussing progressive income tax. And that is essentially the foundation of the sort of system that Wolfe is excoriating in tDiaF. The point is that the rich pay more. They are less reliant on public facilities. And they are out-voted.

Racism is illegal?

Errr...yes. I suppose an employer can certainly hold any view he wants privately...very privately...but it's illegal for him to act on it. If he expresses racist views in private, he opens himself to lawsuit even if he doesn't actually do anything. So, yeah. Racism is illegal and socially persecuted. Not that I'm complaining about it, but we should face the truth for what it is.

Classism, in this case, means "Sure, I can find a spot for your boy on my investment bank team."

This certainly happens for politicians. I'm thinking of VP Biden's son. But it's not the thoroughfare to success.

Who benefits when thousands of people can get into town BY TRAIN to see a basketball game?
The poor? or the team owner?

So you're saying the rich should pay for a "public space" to benefit the owners of a basketball team who probably don't even live locally. Oh yes! The owners of a basketball team and the poor.

No. I meant that (even if everyone else earned the same amount and paid the same in taxes) I would still see the benefit of shared space and goods.

But we don't pay the same amount in taxes. The top 5% pay 60% of the taxes. That is situation Wolfe was portraying in tDiaF.

For one thing, there is the economy of scale, as for example when building a rail system, as well as collective bargaining power. How many trains could you build yourself? And it's cheaper than paying for a second car and gas.

No passenger train has ever paid for itself. That's why its "cheaper". You pay it in higher costs of everything you buy. Even if the government gave the land and the materials, if the riders where

charged the real cost to use it, they would get a second car. (I live in Austin, TX where three private railway systems have started and failed in the last 120 years).

If I had to pay for everything
(everything---think no health insurance)
at (free) market rates, my family and I would starve and die.

You're paying in higher costs, lower salaries, and lost opportunities. So am I. There is no perpetual motion machine and there is no free lunch. The only thing the Market does is tell you the real value and cost of things.

Look I don't understand why this is so hard to get. You understand that if you want more electric cars, you need to subsidize them, right? If you want fewer people to smoke, you tax the activity. Why is it so hard to understand that if you want more of your populace to be financially independent, you need to stop punishing them for it.

J.