

# Re: Government/society in post-scarcity interstellar environments

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  - *Date:* Sat, 20 Oct 2007 23:32:09 +0200
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In particular, I vaguely expect at some point in the future for many societies to be "libertarian welfare states". In these societies, the great majority of people are welfare bums. However, at the same time the wealthy tax base is taxed at such a low rate that they don't care and hardly even notice it. If 3% of their capital gains are taxed to keep the hordes of bums happy, the wealthy class doesn't mind. And the bums, who represent the bulk of the voting demographic, don't mind otherwise laissez faire policies so long as they're living large on their fat welfare checks.

Keep in mind that people generally compare themselves to the more fortunate. I have a lower-middle-class income, and can't help mildly bitching to myself about those who can afford brand new modern cars and take overseas vacations twice a year – I bet I could afford one, if I didn't spend my total of six weeks vacation per year doing other things. And my car, bought used, is thirteen years old (or most of it is). Although remembering my past, less wealthy, does help. Time was when I had to lug the shitcan out to the nearby bog when full, dig a hole, and empty it there, because the house we lived in then didn't have a water closet. Time was when I liked to visit my grandparents in part because they had TV. Yet I live an enormously wealthy life compared to the vast majority a few centuries ago – in some respects, compared even to kings and emperors a few centuries ago. Napoleon and Henry VIII never got to skydive or play computer games, did they? I also live enormously wealthily compared to very large numbers of people elsewhere in the world today – people who live in deep poverty through not having work, or earn a dollar a day doing very hard work indeed, hazardous and unhealthy. Alang Beach, anyone?

In an age where technology and economy allow the rich to own, say, entire O'Neill-type habitats or large tropical estates on thoroughly terraformed planets, and travel across the solar system in a day, don't you think the welfare bums will bitch that they only have a single garden of half an acre

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each, and have to take the slow ships, several weeks to get anywhere in the solar system? When the rich can have genetic surgery to give them perfect looks and perfect health for a thousand years, and to them facial features and body shapes, corrigible with easy and utterly safe surgery, are a matter of fashion like clothes are today, the middle class will complain that they may have to go around with wrinkles around their eyes for nearly a \*decade\* before it can be corrected by the robo–surgeons, or else have to save up by forgoing one of the two yearly round–the–solar–system cruises. There may be controversy because poor people's kids can't afford to have their eye colour periodically corrected according to the changing fashions, but must make do with contact lenses. This makes the richer kids laugh at them, so this income disparity is very unfair to the poor kids – SOMETHING MUST BE DONE!

Tax the rich some more!

Nor is it a given that the rich will accept being deprived of 3% of their enormous income in taxes to support the welfare bums. It seems that greed and wealth go hand in hand, though I don't know which way the causality goes. Both ways, I suppose. But those who bitch loudest about high taxes are not the ones left with the smallest income after, but those who pay the most – and who are also left with the most after. If their income rises by a million per year, they will complain more at what they have to pay of this in taxes than be pleased at how much more they have to spend. If this country did get a flat tax rate, you may be certain that some of the rich would ask for a logarithmic tax rate, because with a flat tax rate they pay so many more greenbacks in taxes than the lower incomes do, and that's so unfair because they don't benefit correspondingly more from the taxes.

Hræfn.

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