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happiness sharing as a way to peace

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§1 Poverty Draft? No!

11 August 2015

For conscientious reasons I do not endorse my country's reliance on the poverty draft (a) which is based on enforcement of a perpetual social underclass and (b) which allows people of wealth to divorce their actions from their proclamations.

Instead I insist that the best national service allows people to *vote with their feet*. All those who believe in having a military *must* serve in it by universal conscription. Personally serving in that military will be the *only* way that these people can perpetuate the institution; they cannot buy their way out if it. By choosing *conscientious alternatives to military participation*, all others will vote by their actions to establish *social justice* as the rational replacement for military activity.

Let us hope that countries with conscription do or will recognize conscientious objection. Let us also hope that, through enlightened effort, countries will overcome the conditions that make a poverty draft possible. Thus we do not attack privileged people; we convert them as we heal society.

§ 2 Profit Motive? Why Not?

My campaign to abolish profit motive is not a threat against public values. I constantly marvel that the American economy gives people broad selection at the retail level. The market efficiently decides production levels and market shares—better done without “profit motive.” Just as power corrupts people, profit motive corrupts the market’s choices. For example, both for-profit healthcare and the arms market would find it “bad for business” to *eliminate* the root causes that create a “profitable” market. Profit **motive** *opposes* removing the causes of suffering; it propels in the direction of keeping customers dependent on more product. Greed for financial gain puts self ahead of community. There are two further illustrations of market distortion (short-sightedness) resulting from selfish motives: environment and wages.

Regarding the **environment**, consider for example the disruptions associated with use of palm oil, microbeads, mountaintop removal coal mining, dirty oil production, and tobacco. There are logical reasons to curb each of these. An enlightened market gives common consent to less injurious products and methods as people value social benefits above financial shortcuts. Exploitation (greed) drives the pursuit of monetary profitability for the few, causing detriment to health and environment for the many. [see EMv01n03§4 “Healthy Lives”]

Regarding **wages**, it seems self-evident that “profit” is a distribution of resources that does not directly reward labor. Basically goods and services are exchanged to improve life by meeting human needs. Every person is a producer of at least something and a consumer of many things. The market is a process by which these factors align themselves to match needs and production efficiently. The market can meet costs of production by charging for *materials and labor* that comprise goods and services; it does not require appendage of a burden called

"profit." All people require "wages." It is only a matter of individual greed if certain people acting on selfish self-interest decide also to extract "profit." That does not improve the *market*.

This is the logical step at which we apply the word "capital." Yes, I believe in capital. In my training, capital is the fruits of production which are invested instead of being consumed. My earliest introduction to the concept was the story of the primitive man who realized that if he does not EAT the ox today, he can use the ox to pull a plow and vastly increase food production tomorrow. The ox is the capital that enables increased production. As with the concept "market," the concept "capital" is not inseparably bound to "profit." Here, too, it is personal greed that makes a *motivation* out of extracting the evil appendage.

In my world, in exchange for wages we produce goods and services to meet human needs. We increase production by deferring consumption; unconsumed product becomes the capital that accomplishes the increase. To suppose that "profit motive" is a **necessary driver** of progress manifests an injurious lack of imagination. There is a better scenario. It is common to borrow capital with the expectation that the increased production will repay the loan, as illustrated by the purchase of my first car for my piano tuning business. I see it as tragedy when the borrower remains forever indentured to the lender who is considered an "owner." That leads to governance of corporations by voters who have no expertise in production and who see the corporation primarily as their own selfish self-interest tool for extraction of "profit." *I refuse to own stock because profit* (which does not include the permissible retained "rainy day" fund belonging to the workers) *consists of resources stolen from what should be wages*. Indeed, if a corporation exists for the generation of profit (as some textbooks declare), it is a diabolical monstrosity based on theft of wages! A company of that sort is a collusion among the wealthy, by which those *who do not labor* use their

wealth to *extract* riches from *those who do labor*, i.e., from those who work to improve life by *meeting human needs*, fulfilling the true purpose of a company. Of course this exacerbates income disparity: the distribution of "profit" takes the fruits of labor from those who labor and awards those resources to (passive) investors who have already accumulated superior wealth. That system rewards accumulation of wealth at the expense of those whose labor is the *source* of real wealth.

The sales euphemism "conscientious investing" referring to selecting "good" corporations that do not destroy the environment is a ruse that *distracts attention* from the moral underpinnings of the current discussion. All companies should exercise good conscience by strictly avoiding environmental degradation, alcoholic beverages, tobacco, weapons, gambling, other health hazards, shoddy workmanship, planned obsolescence, and so forth. "Conscience" is not to become a slogan for perpetuating extraction of profit, i.e. for unconscionable **motive** to conduct even a "clean" business.

Indeed, the market and all companies within it can be morally sound tools for efficient production and egalitarian distribution of goods and services. As demonstrated, my definition has no dependence on the concept "profit." The word "imagination" used above deliberately points out that better alternatives are to be found. Indeed, many already exist. One start-up technique is the worker collaborative in which private individuals of moderate means join their assets to build a factory or other business which they will jointly own. All proceeds earned by the business constitute the wages of those who improved their earnings *from work* by joining the venture. Another perfectly respectable variant engages common people (not an authoritarian elite) who democratically tax themselves to build and then collectively own the enterprise. This alternative offers *transparency and common interest*, making the producers, consumers, investors, stakeholders, wage-earners and

production beneficiaries all the *same people*. That is morally a pretty good idea!

Of course I am an optimist: "I will see it when I believe it." I use the word "imagine" instead of "dream" because the former word might have a more active connotation. While imagining, I am constantly refining and debugging as I work on realizing a result. *I believe in the better world -> I will see the better world -> I will inhabit the better world*. That world has markets and capital, but definitely no *profit motive*. Here it is wise to remember that declaring utopia by enacting restrictive laws is not feasible. Laws do not make us what we are; they reflect who we are. We need to nurture our future generations in the knowledge that selfish self-interest is the greed that destroys, not enhances, civilization. Properly we become a society where we labor unselfishly at our best because we *mutually* understand that doing so brings about the BEST UNIVERSAL OUTCOME.

EPILOG

Obviously I am not an economist. Making **moral** judgments does not require me to have a degree in theology, and it also does not require me to have a degree in economics. Scientific inquiry helps me to navigate consequences, but it does not alone determine the **values** I place on outcomes. I choose the kinder sharing society in place of the increased speed and productivity of a materialistic society, using the sciences as tools toward *implementing* as well as informing my moral choices.