
Rich have responsibility to give back

By Aaron W. Hughey

If you scratch just below the surface of Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker's campaign to eliminate collective bargaining rights for public employees, it becomes painfully obvious this battle is about a lot more than deficit reduction and balancing the budget.

It is really about who has access to the American Dream.

If you live in the United States and are doing well financially, you need to realize you did not achieve this in a vacuum. The society to which you belong played a key role in your success.

The idea that anyone can make it "on their own" is a myth perpetuated primarily by those who wish to absolve themselves of their inherent responsibility to give back to those who made their success possible.

Clearly, personal initiative is integral to any significant accomplishment — regardless of whether we are talking about business or

sports. The value of hard work should never be underrated or minimized.

But other, equally important factors are always involved. Having an innovative idea, favorable market conditions, a supportive network and good timing are all essential ingredients.

These advantages are not afforded everyone.

Those who like to think they "pulled themselves up by their own bootstraps" are simply self-deluded.

In every almost instance, they were provided with boots, bootstraps, a place to stand and instructions.

Bill Gates and Warren Buffet no doubt worked hard, but their extraordinary wealth is also a result of the tremendous opportunities afforded them by this country.

The notion that the wealthy should be taxed at the same rate

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as everybody else comes primarily from the wealthy and is based on the assumption that the rich will use their enhanced resources to

foster economic prosperity and create jobs.

The problem with this rather dubious strategy for stimulating economic growth is there is very little evidence it actually works.

During tough economic times, the well off tend to hold on to their money in order to insulate themselves and their families from financial uncertainty.

Americans who have "made it" owe a significant debt to the social, cultural, political and especially the economic environment we enjoy in the United States; this should never be lost in the discussion or taken for granted.

Most of the people we consider

rich got that way — either currently or through past generations — because of the unparalleled opportunities this country afforded them.

As such, they have a heightened responsibility to give back to those who made their success possible.

And just in case anyone is tempted to run screaming from the room, progressive taxation is not socialism.

It is an inherently fair way to deal with the economic realities looming on the horizon.

"From everyone who has been given much, much will be required." By the way, that's not the Communist Manifesto. It's Luke 12:48.

What you are required to give back should be based on what you have taken. Everyone needs to pay their fair share.

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