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your product. Firms hire workers whenever the worker can produce a good for sale at a lower cost than the customer is willing to pay, otherwise the owner of the firm loses money.

Whether the worker is a high school drop-out who flips hamburgers for minimum wage or has a master's degree in engineering and designs nuclear power stations, he or she is doing real work in a real job, just of different value. Capitalist firms are constantly searching for markets where customers value the firm's output at more than cost. Not all firms are successful in this endeavor, and either go bankrupt or find a new market. We are all familiar with the restaurant that just never got its act together, or the inventor who comes up with a product that flops. Firms that were once famous and respected such as Kodak in photography, Smith Corona in typewriters, and Black Berry in phones have run into trouble and had to lay off workers and/or close. Other firms, such as Apple and Google, are expanding and hiring workers.

In every case, from the lowest paid job to the highest, every worker in a capitalist firm is "pulling their own weight." No charity is involved, and the firm is not doing the worker a favor; they have a relationship of mutuality where each is benefiting the other. The firm and its workers need no subsidies since their customers willingly pay to get their output, since customers value that output higher than it costs to produce. Entrepreneurs are constantly creating *real* jobs for workers, not out of charity, but as a byproduct of their search for profit-making opportunities. The search for profit (and avoidance of loss) both creates jobs and disciplines firms to make sure that workers are truly productive. This mechanism makes capitalism a real job creating machine.

Government Employment

Famously, during the Great Depression, the U.S. government "employed" hundreds of thousands of young men in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) where they did unskilled manual labor on conservation projects on federal lands and in state and national parks. This program started in 1933 during the height of the depression and ended in 1942 as the U.S. girded for war. Over 9 years, 3 million men participated in the program. One of the most popular of government programs during the depression, it was shut down as civilian work became more plentiful and as the government found a greater need for young men in the military. Did the CCC create "jobs" or was it a government run charity doing make-work (in whole or in part)?

The answer to this question is crucial. If the government as an institutional arrangement is capable of creating jobs successfully at scale, we might have a legitimate alternative to capitalism in this crucial area of life. This question extends beyond a beloved program from a previous era and informs today's government jobs. Is every park ranger at Amicalola Falls State Park, every golf course worker at George T. Bagby State Park, every sanitation worker in the city of Marietta, Ga, every school teacher in the Atlanta Public Schools system, every bus driver for Cobb County Transit, every police officer, official in the governor's office, or Port of Savannah worker in a real job? Or are they the beneficiary of charity in a make-work job (in whole or in part)? Now broaden the question out from Atlanta and Georgia to the country as a whole, including all 21.7 million civilian city, state, and federal workers.¹ This question is not meant to insult government employees (after all, I myself am a professor at a public, or government owned university), but is instead a serious one about government's ability to provide *real* jobs as opposed to make-work. The question cannot be easily answered in either the affirmative or negative.

The Government Cannot Consistently Create *Real* Jobs

¹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/204535/number-of-governmental-employees-in-the-us/>.

Lastly, to avoid pointing fingers at other government workers, do we know if university professors at state universities are “pulling their weight”, or are they in charity infused make-work jobs? Should public universities be expanded, and more professors and other educators hired, or should the university system be scaled back with some professors laid-off to pursue more productive activities? If the university system charged the full cost of what they were doing, we could quickly find out if the system was productive and the professors are in real jobs as opposed to make-work jobs. Since state universities are heavily subsidized, we don’t know if students are getting their money’s worth since they don’t know the true cost.

Summary

Our analysis now permits us to see that while many government workers are in **real** jobs providing goods and services more valuable than it costs to provide them, we also know that many are not. We see that governments who deliver “free” or subsidized goods and services to taxpayers do not have a good mechanism in most cases to distinguish between real jobs and make-work, charity jobs. We also see that Free-Market Capitalism has an excellent mechanism, profit and loss, that forces firms to create real jobs where the workers are producing more value than they cost. Do not fall for the siren song of politicians who promise that they can solve the problem of unemployment by creating jobs. It is far more likely that they will destroy real jobs than create them.