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Welcome to Lootersville [1]

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It?s the fag end of a grim summer ? the rolling debt crisis has the financial system on the precipice again, economic growth in the western world is faltering, famine haunts Somalia and the Middle East?s killing fields are especially productive from Pakistan to Libya.

It?s time for some spirited libertarian thinking, if not to solve all the world?s problems, at least a very little local difficulty here in the UK: what to do with all those looters? The jails are already full and they?re really only an enhanced training program for advanced criminality in any case. So how about combining something old with something new in a bold initiative?

Back in the old days, criminals were transported to far flung corners of the world like Australia. Not only did this remove undesirables from the home country but it planted the seeds for world class cricket, rugby and beach volleyball teams, not to mention addictive soap operas, decent wines and successful talk show hosts. All in all, not a bad result and better than what comes out Her Majesty?s Prisons now.

Unfortunately, we?ve run out of empty countries so enter The Seasteading Institute [3], a California outfit founded by Patri Friedman, grandson of ASI darling Milton Friedman. Their big idea is to create communities floating out at sea, much like giant oil drilling rigs, and populating these with libertarian-minded souls. As the Institute puts it, ?we work to enable seasteading communities -- floating cities -- which will allow the next generation of pioneers to peacefully test new ideas for government. The most successful can then inspire change in governments around the world.?

Why not engage The Seasteading Institute to create communities for our malcontents, those looters who say there?s no place for them in our society? After all, what?s not to dislike for many of them in their current situation? A welfare system that breeds generations of dependency? An educational system that fails to teach literacy and numeracy? DIY shows to speed scrambles up the property ladder? Beggared pension schemes? Panel discussions by intellectuals about enhancing self-worth?

No, let the looters and rioters collect their guns, their knives, their drugs and their drinks and ship them out to a Seastead where they can make their own living arrangements. Could they do any worse for themselves? There?s a few billions now being wasted on silly schemes like high-speed rail links to Birmingham and offshore wind farms. If we?re determined to spend it all on something foolish, let?s at least try it on something imaginative.

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