

## [I used to be a productive member of society like you...](#) [1]

Written by [Anton Howes](#) [2] | Thursday 15 December 2011



*Skyrim* damages the economy [according to Geek Dad writer Dave Banks](#) [3]. His explanation is worth a read, gushing with praise for one of the most immersive and impressive video games yet, and finishing with a petition to politicians to ban Bethesda from making such great games. But it should be read as a parody, as one of the best and most culturally relevant mock petitions since Bastiat pretended that the sun was putting unprotected candle makers out of business.

Unlike Bastiat's petition, this one has a more modern target, pointing out the skewed priorities of many economists and econometricians. While capitalists are most often accused of being obsessed with economic efficiency and making money, the true materialists are the Keynesians and statists. In fact, free-marketeers and particularly the Austrian school instead focus on human action and preferences, and would see the decision to lock yourself in a room for the 300 hours of *Skyrim's* estimated game-play as perfectly valid.

Some may not approve, and others may tell you to get a life doing something 'productive'. To top it all, you may well not be the best, most rational decision-maker. But you still know yourself best, and you often unconsciously act on it; after all, your definition of 'productive' may involve clearing Dwemer ruins, mining ore on a snow-swept mountainside, and absorbing dragon souls.

People like Owen Jones who decry the '[funemployment](#)' [4] of the wealthy forget that the whole point of work is to pay for leisure. They're right that work sometimes brings its own therapeutic benefits, and perhaps a degree of dignity, but the free market and the progress of technology have allowed our generation to have more leisure time than ever before. Rather than being good for its own sake, employment is the cost of leisure, as defined by our personal preferences and decisions.

The money earned doesn't just provide some security and standard of living, but also gives us the opportunity to pursue our own happiness. If that happiness involves 'wasting' your time becoming a thane or slaying virtual vampires, then how else were you going to spend it? On vapid consumer spending to 'boost the economy'? There's something inherently wrong about the idea, as if you're working for others at your own expense; and the value of Mr Banks' parodic petition is in making it so obvious and repugnant. So let's give ourselves a deserved break and have our virtual adventures, before we take the metaphorical arrow to the knee and are stuck back at work on a Monday morning.

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**Links:**

[1] <http://www.adamsmith.org/blog/media-culture/i-used-to-be-a-productive-member-of-society-like-you>

[2] <http://www.adamsmith.org/taxonomy/term/5795>

[3]

[http://www.wired.com/geekdad/2011/12/skyrim/?utm\\_source=facebook&utm\\_medium=socialmedia&utm\\_campaign=facebo](http://www.wired.com/geekdad/2011/12/skyrim/?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=socialmedia&utm_campaign=facebo)

[4] <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/may/15/clamp-down-unemployment-worklessness-tax-rich>

[5] [http://disqus.com/?ref\\_noscript](http://disqus.com/?ref_noscript)

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