

## [Common Error No. 36](#) [1]

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### **36. "Welfare stigmatizes the poor. We should all be paid a citizen's income."**

Welfare represents our decision as a society to help those on hard times. If people become unable to fend for themselves because of sickness or unemployment, society has decided to help them overcome their difficulties and put them back on their feet. For most who need it, it is seen as a temporary support to aid people through difficulties. There are some, permanently incapacitated, who will always need society's support, but these are a small minority.

Welfare is not conceived of as a permanent alternative to employment for those who simply prefer leisure. The healthy young male who prefers to sit at home and spend the day on his computer while he draws job-seeker's allowance is not a legitimate or deserving recipient of other people's support. Others have to pay higher taxes to support his leisurely lifestyle. The single young female who thinks it would be pleasant to have a child should not expect to do so and to live at home with that child, having all her living costs paid for by others.

In such cases the claimant is capable of taking paid employment and of engaging in more responsible behaviour. The presence of a welfare income gives an option for them to choose a dependent lifestyle, and an incentive to prefer it. The problem with welfare has always been how to target it to those who merit society's generosity, without making it available to those who would abuse it.

A citizen's income gives welfare a permanence and universality it was never intended to have. It makes it too easy for people to choose leisure at the taxpayer's expense, rather than becoming a productive part of society. It also involves taking money from most of us in taxation, and giving it back less the huge and wasteful administrative costs such programmes always entail.

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