



Ex-gov Jesse Ventura: NO ONE Should be Allowed to be a Billionaire

Jesse Ventura, who had the nickname “the body” during his professional wrestling days and wanted to be known as “the mind” when he was Minnesota governor, perhaps now should have the moniker “the green-eyed.” Some may thus conclude after the 72-year-old said that “nobody works hard enough to earn a billion dollars” and, consequently, that “there should not be one billionaire in America.”

Ventura said nothing, however, about whether there should be multi-millionaires. Perhaps coincidentally, he happens to be a multi-millionaire.

Ventura made his comments at the Steel City Con, a comic-book conference in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The event took place back in April, but for some reason MSN.com picked up the story just this week.

While discussing his military career and varied work history during a conference question-and-answer session, Ventura remarked the jobs that “were physically the most demanding and mentally the most difficult that I ever did, paid me the least amount of money.”

Moneywise, via MSN.com, [relates](#) the rest of the story:

One of the toughest experiences he had was going through the Basic Underwater Demolition/SEALS training program for the Navy.

“I challenge any billionaire to put up with six weeks of that at \$62 every two weeks,” he said....

Before joining the Navy, Ventura says he had a job with the Minnesota Highway Department making a “couple of bucks above minimum wage” where he worked four 10-hour days a week.

“And guess what I did? I ran the 80-pound jackhammer,” he said. “I challenge any billionaire to run the jackhammer for 40 hours for one week and then tell me he works harder than that.”



AP Images
Jesse Ventura



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“That’s why I believe,” the multi-millionaire concluded, “there should not be a billionaire in the world. You didn’t earn that money!” (video below. Relevant portion begins 28:10).

Ventura’s remarks certainly were rhetorically effective, delivered in the colorful style that made him an outstanding pro-wrestling “heel” and, later, commentator. One might say the presentation smacked of demagoguery, too — except that Ventura exudes sincerity. The problem is that he’s sincerely wrong.

He sure does have company in that, though. Under his [video on Tik Tok](#), for example, many respondents channeled Karl Marx.

“Say the quiet part out loud next!” reads a comment that has 2,734 likes. “Nobody works hard enough to earn a billion dollars — THEY STOLE IT FROM THE WORKERS.”

“I don’t want it to be illegal to own a billion dollars,” “Abby Someone” chimed in. “I want it to be impossible to legally obtain a billion dollars.”

Over in the MSN.com [comments section](#), however, the top respondents were more free market-oriented.

“Somebody got hit too hard on the mat,” quipped “Tired Retired.” “Why would anyone want to innovate if their profits were taken away? Socialism fails on every level because as soon as effort isn’t rewarded, it stops.”

Poster Roger Kobleske added, “If communist China can have them [billionaires], why can’t free USA?”

For my part, I’ll preface my comments by saying that, pauper of a prince that I am (wink), I’d be giddy to have Ventura’s net worth (\$6 million). I’m also suspicious of the mega-rich. For just as you don’t become the world’s best gymnast without being passionate about gymnastics, you likely won’t make billions unless money is your passion — or, even, obsession. But does this give us any more right to seize someone’s wealth than to, if we could, seize a person’s “excess” gymnastics ability?

Ventura laments the low pay of many people who “make the world go ‘round.” Yet just as “The best things in life are free,” the best things are often done for free. A woman lovingly mothering her child or a man being a devoted husband and father is a prime example.

Then, someone should ask Ventura: How do you arrive at your billion-dollar figure? Should someone be “allowed” to make three-quarters of a billion? A half-billion? One-hundred million? One dollar less than a billion? What’s the threshold and how is this determined?

Furthermore, do people “earn” any of the above amounts any more than they do a billion? Did Ventura “earn” the millions he made being akin to a sideshow performer? In fact, following his logic out, and considering his claim that his SEAL endeavors were harder than anything else he did, should he have been “allowed” to only make \$62 every two weeks for his wrestling and acting?

If the answer is no or “That’s ridiculous,” it’s only justified by a principle another MSN commenter put well. “You don’t get paid for how hard you work,” noted “Smooth Operator.” “You get paid for the value of what you produce” — as determined *by the market*.

For sure. No economic system that ever existed paid people strictly based on “work,” measured, let’s say, by energy expended (calories burned). (Communist systems are actually *no exception*, either. Kim Jong-un in North Korea, for example, certainly doesn’t work as hard as a field or factory worker — but enjoys *far greater wealth*.)

Implicit in Ventura’s thinking is rejection of the market-system standard — and an embrace of the



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theoretical communist standard. Of course, none of this is intended. And that he hasn't thought through his proposal reflects how it is a product of emotion, not reason.

At the end of the day, soak-the-rich appeals are, generally, driven by envy. This helps explain why socialist types have a big problem with private individuals controlling billions, but no problem with the government controlling trillions. And since it leads to empowerment of the state, it's a good reason why, as with pride, envy can go before a fall.



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