



The Top Ten Reasons Why TITSATAAFL (There Is Too Such a Thing as a Free Lunch)

By Dr. Mason Gaffney

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1. Improved allocation is free lunch. The “win-win” deal, if real, is a free lunch. (That’s why trade, when it is uncoerced, yields such strong benefits.)
2. Putting idle workers in good jobs is a free lunch. So is using idle land, if the use is environmentally benign, and pays net rent.
3. Many positive feedback loops are free lunches. Examples: thawing a frozen market; pooling risks; pooling supply and

demand; creating confidence.

4. Synergy. Spillovers, or “external economies” Some economists would like to define



By the way...

them away — but

we can't deny that better schools, for example, make for happier students, calmer parents, higher property values and improved college acceptance rates.

5. Eliminating waste, by re-moving barriers to better allocation of resources, yields a free lunch.

6. Increasing A's welfare a great deal by dropping B's only a little. Switching one acre from the owner of 200,000 hurts him — on the average — less than it helps a donee who has just one.

7. Sharing public goods is a free lunch. (“Public goods” are goods whose use by more persons does not interfere with use by present users, or others. They are supplies whose Marginal Cost is Zero.)

8. Moving toward more equal percentage shares is likely to improve allocation — e.g. doubling industrial water by reducing farm water by a mere 5%.

9. Any policy that breaks an impasse is a free lunch — especially policies that compose two problems into one solution. Example: Incentivizing infill development via tax

policy makes public transportation more affordable while curbing the ecological impacts of suburban sprawl.

10. Land rent and gains are a free lunch. The question is, who gets them — the community, or the freeloaders?

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