

# Headline English

2011, week 35 *Learn English through reading on current world affairs*

## 1 **Does such generosity make sense?**

2 original at

3 <http://www.economist.com/node/21525851>

4 People don't like to be at the bottom. One paradoxical consequence of this  
5 "last-place aversion" is that some poor people may be vociferously  
6 opposed to the kinds of policies that would actually raise their own income  
7 a bit but that might also push those who are poorer than them into  
8 comparable or higher positions. The authors of a recent paper ran a series  
9 of experiments where students were randomly allotted sums of money,  
10 separated by \$1, and informed about the "income distribution" that  
11 resulted. They were then given another \$2, which they could give either to  
12 the person directly above or below them in the distribution.

13 In keeping with the notion of "last-place aversion", the people who were a  
14 spot away from the bottom were the most likely to give the money to the  
15 person above them: rewarding the "rich" but ensuring that someone  
16 remained poorer than themselves. Those not at risk of becoming the  
17 poorest did not seem to mind falling a notch in the distribution of income  
18 nearly as much. This idea is backed up by survey data from America  
19 collected by Pew, a polling company: those who earned just a bit more  
20 than the minimum wage were the most resistant to increasing it.

21 Poverty may be miserable. But being able to feel a bit better-off than  
22 someone else makes it a bit more bearable.

## Questions

- 1) Explain the meaning of 'vociferously' (line 5).
- 2) What is 'last-place aversion' (line 5)?
- 3) What is the paradoxical consequence of the last-place aversion discussed in the article?
- 4) What did the experiment described in the article consist of?
- 5) Why is the adjective 'rich' (line 15) typed in inverted commas?
- 6) Does the experiment described by the article in any way relate to the real world?
- 7) Explain the concept of 'minimum wage' (line 20).
- 8) Do you agree with the conclusion of the article?
- 9) How would you act in an experiment of the kind described in the article?
- 10) How would you answer the question posed in the title of the article?

## Vocabulary

**in keeping with** (line 13) – in line with, conforming to, in harmony with, in compliance with, according to

**notch** (line 17) – a step, degree, or grade

**back up** (line 18) – to support or serve as a basis

**bearable** (line 22) – tolerable, endurable

You can find additional explanation and more examples to help you understand and use English words and phrases at <http://dictionary.reference.com>, <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/> or <http://www.ldoceonline.com/>

Přejeme Vám mnoho studijních úspěchů.

Tým jazykové skupiny Spěváček:

