

Re: Historical comparisons

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Any system of privilege requires government sanction to work. The question we have to ask is, the system of privilege beneficial to society or not? Is the system of privilege fair or unfair?

The US patent office grants letters of patent to provide a monopoly for an inventor of a new product or process for a limited period of time. This is a privilege. But I don't judge it to be an unfair one, since it allows the creator of wealth to capture a portion of that wealth for himself. This benefits society because this encourages people to create new things that enrich our lives. Its sort of like granting an artist the right to own his artwork, which can be worth far more than the time and material put into it.

Slavery is an example of an unfair system of privilege, where those who benefit from the privilege of slave ownership do so at a tremendous cost to those who are enslaved. This is an unfair privilege and actually impoverishes society since the creativity and productivity of those enslaved are so diminished.

Granting rights of ownership of resources to those who discover and develop new resources unknown prior to their discovery and development – works the way patent law works. I can see an argument being made that these should be limited in time to 20 years or so – but granting ownership rights to those who take the trouble to discover and develop resources seems to me to be a fair granting of rights. It also seems to me since it encourages people to go out and develop resources that otherwise wouldn't be developed efficiently, it seems to me to be a good thing for society. So, I support it.

So, I think if there were an international body set up to grant ownership rights to off-world resources, you would see lots of money flowing into off-world development and ultimately, you would see goods and materials flowing down from the skies to enrich all life on Earth. The current restriction on ownership of celestial bodies has blocked this sort of development and I think it should change sooner rather than later.