Lecture 10-1

Work and Wealth
6. You're in a car with a helium balloon tied to the floor. The windows are closed. When you step on the gas pedal, what happens to the balloon – does it move forward, move backward, or stay put?

Does the balloon move forward, backward or stay still?

A
Moves forward

B
Moves backward

C
Stays put

By Kirit Saelensminde
Workplace Changes

• Technology has fundamentally changed workplace organization
  – Flattening out organizational structures, so that reporting tends to occur between affected people rather than along predefined paths
  – Facilitating the monitoring of employees
    • Slacking off at work
    • Illegal activities by employees
  – Allowing telecommuting

• How do you feel about these changes?
  – Do you think they improve or degrade employee experience?
Globalization

• The marketing of goods and services across global rather than national scales
  – Manufacturing goods in China, often using Canadian or Australian raw materials
  – Call centers in India

• Effects of globalization
  – Increased shipping and travel
  – Foreign workers (visas), students
  – Outsourcing

• Do you think globalization is a problem or a benefit?
The “Winner-Take-All Society”

• Occurs when a small number of top performers receive a large fraction of the rewards
  – Athletes, musicians, actors, law schools

• Harmful effects
  – Reduces the production of (e.g., cultural) goods
  – Unfair: severe penalty for falling a bit short
  – Leads to arms races

• What can be done?
  – Legal limits (e.g., working hours) to limit arms races
  – Cooperative agreements (e.g., cap on salaries in sports league)
  – Progressive taxation

• Beneficial effects
  – Why shouldn’t we watch the best actors, athletes, etc?
  – I enjoy reading the same books as my friends (network effects)
  – Maybe a slightly better CEO (lawyer, etc.) really does make a huge difference to my company
Let’s try a class debate:

“It is immoral for a corporation to pay its CEO 400 times as much as a production worker.”

If the last digit of your primary (e.g., mobile) phone number is even, you’re arguing for the proposition.