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While most of my disdain is focused on the clowns in Washington, I enjoy poking fun at the policies adopted by the various nitwits and thugs that can be found in other governments.

That's why I've [mocked the British government-run healthcare system](#) for letting a woman die when officials failed to notice a six-inch toilet brush handle embedded in her buttocks.

That's why I've [laughed at the German tax police](#) for spending 30 times as much money as they collected in an investigation of untaxed online sales of coffee beans.

That's why I've [heaped abuse on Japanese regulators](#) for arresting people for providing coffee enemas without government licenses.

But this story from Norway may be the worst example of government stupidity. The taxpayers apparently are going to [pay money to provide friends](#) for a piece of human refuse who murdered 77 people.

The Norwegian prison where Anders Behring Breivik may be locked up for massacring 77 people last year will hire people with whom he can socialise, to keep him away from other inmates, media reported Thursday. ...To avoid keeping the confessed killer in total isolation, the high security prison, northwest of Oslo, could let him play sports with the guards and hire someone to play chess with him, among other things, he added. "We are planning a professional community around him, with employees and hired personnel," he told the paper. Bjarkeid did not say how much the measures would cost. Norwegian law forbids keeping prisoners in total isolation for long periods of time because it is considered an unduly cruel punishment.

I would think "unduly cruel" is a grossly inadequate description of what he did when he killed dozens of teenagers, but I'm old fashioned. So forgive me if I'm not overwhelmed by grief at the thought of Mr. Breivik living an isolated life in prison.

But I guess the Norwegians are running out of other ways to waste their oil revenue, so why not squander some of it on a buy-a-friend program for a killer.

P.S. If you like outrageous examples of government stupidity, check out [this post comparing nutty policies in the United States and United Kingdom](#).

I have a confession to make. I'm enjoying the Greece debacle and I like the Greek people.

Sure, there are [lots of moochers in Greece](#). And yes, the government is insanely wasteful, even to the point of [subsidizing pedophiles](#) and [requiring stool samples](#) from folks applying to set up online companies.

But at least there's high entertainment value, such as the altercation in this video between one of the national socialists in the Golden Dawn party and a regular socialist from the Syriza party and one of the international socialists from the Communist party.

Of course, I hope that all of these strains of socialism lose at the polls, just as [I hope that the Keynesians and tax-increasers fight each other to the death in the rest of Europe](#).

Until that point, though, I want more entertainment.

I also have a [certain fondness for the Greeks because of their disdain for the tax authorities](#). These people have an amazing expertise when it comes to not paying taxes (their [Italian](#) and [Irish](#) counterparts also seem less than enthused about giving more money to government).

To be sure, I suspect most of them are motivated by getting something for nothing rather than libertarian principles. But even if they're dodging taxes for the wrong reasons, these [anecdotes from the New York Times](#) are quite amusing.

An essential element of Greece's recovery plan has been to collect more taxes from a population that has long engaged in tax avoidance. The government is owed 45 billion euros in back taxes, tax officials in Athens said, only a fraction of which will ever be recovered. To understand the difficulty, just talk to Nikos Maitos, a longtime official in Greece's financial crimes investigation unit. When he and a team of inspectors recently prowled the recession-hit island of Naxos for tax evaders, a local radio station broadcast his license plate number to warn residents. ... "After two and a half years of austerity, it's really a difficult time to bring in revenue," said Harry Theoharis, a senior official in the Greek Finance Ministry who helps oversee the country's tax payment system. "You can't keep flogging a dead horse." ... Income expected from a higher, 23 percent value-added tax required by the bailout agreement has fallen short by around 800 million euros in the first four months of 2012. That is partly because cash-short businesses that were once law-abiding have started hiding money to stay afloat, tax officials said. ... the government started enforcing a 1995 law that gives them access to bank accounts of suspected tax evaders. But Nikos Lekkas, a top official at the financial crimes agency where Mr. Maitos works, said Greek banks had obstructed nearly 5,000 requests for account data since 2010. "The banks delay sending the information for 8 to 12 months," he said. "And when they do, they send huge stacks of documents to make it confusing. By the time we can follow up, much of the money has already fled." ... During a surveillance trip on the resort island of Santorini, Mr. Maitos said he and two colleagues observed a gas station owner insisting on cash-only transactions to avoid

declaring taxes. When confronted, the man lashed at them with a bullwhip while cursing the state for taking his money.

Pretty impressive. Not only are taxpayers getting help from radio stations and banks, but they even use bullwhips to defend themselves.

It's also worth noting that the "flogging a dead horse" comment and the shortfall in VAT receipts are further evidence for the [Laffer Curve](#).

But I don't want to focus too much on policy in this post. I just want to enjoy the spectacle. In later posts, we'll look to see whether American statisticians have learned any lessons about [reforming entitlements](#) so we avoid a future Greek-style fiscal crisis in America.