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# L.A. City Hall steals from the poor to give to the rich

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The British comedy troupe Monty Python had a skit as part of its 1970s show that parodied the legend of Robin Hood, who took from the rich and gave to the poor in medieval times. The skit was about Dennis Moore, a foolish bandit whose idea of redistribution of wealth, as the skit's song revealed, was a bit confused, though funny, and involved flowers: "He steals from the poor and gives to the rich."

Los Angeles' elected leaders, however, don't seem to realize that the skit was just a joke because they are doing a good job of emulating Monty Python's fool - but without any sense of irony. Or the lupines.

To be sure, it was poor timing for City Hall's leaders that the \$65.5 million in Grand Avenue redevelopment tax breaks surfaced on the same day as the City Council's first-ever "revenue day" (or, more appropriately "tax hike day"), and just days after the mayor proposed more than \$90 million in fee hikes.

But for the public, it was fortuitous because the juxtaposition of these two events painted a stark but accurate picture of the true nature of the city's elected leadership. That picture can be boiled down to: "Steal from the poor and give to the rich."

This rare glimpse of priorities puts to rest the lie that City Hall is working for the people. At every turn, city officials put the interests of monied and politically powerful people, such as billionaire developers and unions, first.

It just makes good political sense:

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The developers and other wealthy business interests pay for their campaigns while the unions use their membership to muster voters. It's a sweet setup, in which the idea of getting elected for doing a good job managing the

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government is essentially thrown out the window.

And that's something that ought to enrage all Angelenos not already incensed about the recent increases in Department of Water and Power rates over the next few years to pay for decades of financial mismanagement, or about the lies told to pass the new, expanded phone tax, or the regular trashing of neighborhoods in the service of "smart growth."

Next week the City Council is set to vote on subsidies for Grand Avenue development, which include letting the developers keep the first \$60 million they raise through the hotel bed tax - a subsidy so overly generous it prompted another downtown hotel to file a lawsuit, which was recently settled.

The redevelopment project would also get to keep \$5.5 million in parking taxes as well as \$24 million from the Community Redevelopment Agency, \$29 million in improvements paid for by local government and \$4.6 million from the county.

That's an outrageous giveaway to rich developers and operators of luxury hotels and retail shops when working Angelenos are being forced to pay higher fees just to cover basic city services.

It's appalling enough that council members would consider giving tax breaks to billionaires during a revenue crisis. But it's untenable when they are simultaneously dreaming up new and creative ways to squeeze more money out of residents already paying a premium for living in Los Angeles.

How might it feel to feed a meter \$4 an hour just to park on a public street in front of your house while the luxury hotel at Grand Avenue won't have to pay \$5.5 million worth of parking taxes?

How can it be fair to force residents to pay \$2.25 a month for the operation of 911, which is one of the basic services city government is charged with providing?

City Hall has not just broken the social contract with the public, it has pulverized it by stealing from the comparatively poor working people of the city and giving to the rich.

And there's nothing funny about that.

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