



The Principle of Fairness and Political Obligation

George Klosko

Ethics, Vol. 97, No. 2 (Jan., 1987), 353-362.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0014-1704%28198701%2997%3A2%3C353%3ATPOFAP%3E2.0.CO%3B2-Y>

Ethics is currently published by The University of Chicago Press.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/ucpress.html>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is an independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to creating and preserving a digital archive of scholarly journals. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact jstor-info@umich.edu.

The Principle of Fairness and Political Obligation*

George Klosko

Though such important political philosophers as John Rawls and H. L. A. Hart have discussed the principle of fairness (or fair play), it has received surprisingly little attention. In Hart's words, the thrust of the principle is as follows: "When a number of persons conduct any joint enterprise according to rules and thus restrict their liberty, those who have submitted to these restrictions when required have a right to a similar submission from those who have benefited by their submission."¹ In this brief paper I attempt to show that the obligations the principle generates are widespread and that it helps to account for some familiar attitudes toward political obligation. Though problems in the principle's formulation remain, I avoid detailed discussion of these here, under the assumption that they can be cleared up. I merely indicate my preferred approach, before moving on to those aspects of the principle upon which I will concentrate.²

I

The main problems with the principle center upon determining exactly what constitutes a joint enterprise or cooperative scheme and exactly how an individual incurs an obligation to contribute to one. Though the principle doubtless applies to various forms of cooperation and to schemes that provide different kinds of goods, it is most worthy of attention when the cooperative schemes in question provide "public goods." Public goods are characterized by two main features: (a) they can be provided only by

* I would like to acknowledge my gratitude to Brian Barry, Daniel Devereux, Steven Finkel, Jeffrey Hockett, and John Simmons for valuable comments on previous drafts of this paper.

1. H. L. A. Hart, "Are There Any Natural Rights?" *Philosophical Review* 64 (1955): 175–91, p. 185; J. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), secs. 18, 52, and "Legal Obligation and the Duty of Fair Play," in *Law and Philosophy*, ed. S. Hood (New York: New York University Press, 1964), pp. 3–18.

2. For discussion of the principle, see esp. A. J. Simmons, *Moral Principles and Political Obligations* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979), chap. 5; R. Arneson, "The Principle of Fairness and Free-Rider Problems," *Ethics* 92 (1982): 616–33; R. Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, 1974), pp. 90–95; D. Lyons, *Forms and Limits of Utilitarianism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 161–76.

Ethics 97 (January 1987): 353–362

© 1987 by The University of Chicago. All rights reserved. 0014-1704/87/9702-0006\$01.00

large numbers of people working in concert; (b) they cannot be enjoyed by particular individuals without being made available to a much wider group of people, frequently to all members of the community.³ Prime examples of public goods are national defense, relief from general environmental hazards such as air pollution, and population control. In these cases, both *a* and *b* are clearly satisfied.

The connections between the principle of fairness and public goods lie in the need for cooperation, which is expressed in *a*, while the need for the principle of fairness grows out of *b*. If we assume that cooperation is perceived as burdensome by those cooperating and the benefits will be provided to a wide range of people whether or not they cooperate, it is in people's interest to enjoy the benefit without cooperating, that is, to be "free-riders."⁴ But according to the principle of fairness, if others are willing to cooperate and the benefits in question are provided, A is also obligated to cooperate. As Rawls says in glossing the principle: "We are not to gain from the cooperative labors of others without doing our fair share."⁵

Goods that can be provided by cooperation can be described as either "excludable" or "nonexcludable." Excludable goods can be provided to particular individuals without being furnished to specified others. Non-excludable goods cannot be denied to specified people; in some cases it is impossible, in others prohibitively inconvenient to provide them to some individuals but not to others. Frequently, if provided at all they must be furnished to all members of society. Given this distinction, public goods fall under the category of nonexcludable goods; nonexcludability corresponds to *b* in the above remarks on public goods.

The principle of fairness works rather easily in cases of excludable goods. If A's neighborhood sets up a pot luck supper at which everyone who attends brings a dish, if A attends he is obligated to bring a dish. Generally, in cases of this sort individuals incur obligations only when they actively seek to attain benefits provided by cooperative schemes. There is a strong presumption that individuals should decide for themselves whether they will be forced to make sacrifices or have their liberty curtailed. And so the choice whether A must bring a dish to the supper should be made by A rather than by the supper's organizers. However, I believe that commentators err in generalizing from cases of this sort and so arguing that the principle of fairness creates obligations only when individuals actively seek out benefits provided. This line of argument implies that the provision of nonexcludable public goods cannot generate obligations.⁶

3. M. Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965), pp. 14–15, with extensive references.

4. On the principle of fairness and free-rider problems, see Arneson.

5. Rawls, *Theory of Justice*, p. 112. The underlying principle is well discussed by Arneson.

6. See Rawls, *Theory of Justice*, pp. 336–37; Nozick, p. 95; F. Miller and R. Sartorius, "Population Policy and Public Goods," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 8 (1979): 148–74, p. 166.

Though considerations of space preclude full discussion here, I believe that the principle does apply to nonexcludable goods, if the goods in question are (1) worth the recipient's effort in providing them,⁷ and (2) "presumptively beneficial." The notion of "presumptively beneficial" goods (or presumptive goods) is somewhat vague and difficult. Basically, such goods must be necessary for a minimally acceptable life. In other words, they must be desired by rational individuals regardless of whatever else they desire, though even this account presupposes a background of generally accepted values and beliefs. For the sake of convenience, unless otherwise indicated, we will use the terms "presumptive goods" and "presumptively beneficial" to refer to goods that satisfy both conditions 1 and 2.⁸

One reason the principle of fairness applies to the provision of presumptive public goods, rather than all public goods that are worth the costs of providing them, is again the presumption that individuals should decide for themselves if they are going to be required to make sacrifices. The cooperative schemes on which we will concentrate provide public goods that are indispensable to the welfare of the community. In these cases the indispensability of the goods overrides the outsider's usual right to choose if he wishes to cooperate.⁹

A series of examples illustrates the principle's applicability to the provision of presumptive public goods. In times of national emergency, when everyone else is willing to contribute to the national defense, A is obligated to contribute her fair share. If certain general restrictions on individuals' patterns of consumption are required in order to alleviate a severe environmental situation or to provide important assurances concerning public health, and everyone else is willing to make the necessary sacrifices, A is obligated to make them as well. The goods noted in these cases and others like them satisfy 1 and 2, and I think it is clear that A is obligated to cooperate. The principle of fairness provides an attractive account of the nature of her obligation.

7. By the "recipient" here, I mean the *average* recipient in the cooperative scheme; it is not necessary that each individual participant benefit. See Lyons, pp. 164–65.

8. Though one can imagine goods that satisfy 2 and not 1 (as one can imagine goods that satisfy 1 and not 2), we will not be concerned with such cases—or with presumptive goods that merely approach not being worth their costs. An example of a good that satisfies 2 but not 1 is the enormous benefit that could be derived from medical research, if scientists were allowed to experiment on human subjects—especially unwilling ones. Though the benefit would doubtless be of great value to rational beings, the means required to attain it make one question its desirability. I will discuss wider applications of the principle of fairness in a future paper.

9. Though detailed discussion of this point cannot be included here, it seems to me that limiting the principle to schemes that supply public goods that are presumptively beneficial provides a way around the thorny problems caused by individuals who might not desire the goods in question or believe them to be worth their costs. In such cases, the burden of proof is on the recipient to show why he believes that the goods are undesirable. Obviously, he would be required to substantiate his position with convincing reasons. Compare Arneson, p. 622, n. 9.

II

In his recent book, *Moral Principles and Political Obligations*, John Simmons argues against the principle of fairness. He contends that it is not able to account for the political obligations of large numbers of citizens.¹⁰ Principles that are inadequate in this way are not sufficiently “general,” to use Simmons’s term.¹¹ An argument along similar lines is recognized as being extremely damaging to the notion of political obligation based on consent. And so Simmons holds that this powerful critique of the theory of consent applies to the principle of fairness as well.

I will not take issue here with Simmons’s contention that an adequate account of political obligation must satisfy some reasonable standard of generality. Rather, I believe that the principle of fairness is not vulnerable on this ground. The principle of fairness does not ground obligation on consent—either express or tacit—and so its generality is not hampered by the need for citizens to consent to their governments. There can be little doubt that the citizens of many modern states enjoy nonexcludable presumptive goods that depend upon the cooperative efforts of their fellows. Among such goods are those mentioned above: national defense, protection from environmental hazards, and public health assurances. I think it is clear that individuals are obligated to contribute to the provision of these goods. As noted above, the principle of fairness presents an attractive account of the nature of their obligation.¹²

The contention that obligations generated by the principle of fairness are widespread can be supported further by an examination of some common attitudes bearing on political obligation. The fact that individuals widely believe that they are obligated to bear burdens for their governments because of considerations rooted in the principle of fairness does not itself mean that they have these obligations. But this obviously strengthens the principle’s claim to account for political obligation.¹³ One of the

10. Simmons, chap. 5, esp. pp. 137–42.

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 55–56.

12. Simmons is able to limit the generality of the principle by requiring that recipients of nonexcludable goods incur obligations only if they are aware that the goods in question are products of cooperative schemes (*ibid.*, p. 132). I believe that this is objectionable; Simmons’s position is criticized by Arneson (pp. 631–33) and G. Kavka (Review of *Moral Principles and Political Obligations*, by A. J. Simmons, *Topoi* 2 [1983]: 227–30, p. 228). Though I do not contend that fairness obligations are binding without regard to any of the subject’s beliefs, in response to Simmons’s view, I would argue that the existence of A’s obligations is to a large extent independent of particular beliefs that he may have. Though certain of his beliefs may be relevant to the status of his obligations, it is not clear why beliefs about the nature of the cooperative effort required to provide particular benefits fall into this category. This is especially true in cases of presumptive goods, in regard to which A can be presumed to be obligated despite his particular beliefs—though I would qualify this position along the lines suggested in n. 8 above.

13. The fact that moral principle *X* is widely held obviously creates some presumption for its validity, though this presumption may not always be very strong. It seems that the strength of the presumption will vary with particular circumstances, e.g., how widely *X* is

principle's significant advantages is that it helps to bridge the gap between abstract discussion of political principles and the actual beliefs of political actors.

The distinctive role the principle of fairness plays in shaping attitudes is seen in the connections people frequently draw between their own obligations to bear various burdens and their perceptions of the burdens borne by other people. Recent studies have shown that people's feelings that they are obligated to bear various burdens are significantly affected by their assessment of the burdens that other individuals are bearing or are willing to bear. The principle of fairness is especially well suited to account for this phenomenon.

Before we proceed, a caveat should be indicated. Empirical research has demonstrated that most individuals—certainly most Americans—are poorly informed about and have undeveloped understandings of political matters. Thus the contention that the political attitudes of many individuals are shaped by the principle of fairness means roughly that the principle underlies many of the political beliefs that they consciously uphold, and that, when their political beliefs are sorted out and systematized, something like the principle of fairness is seen to play a significant role. Though research upon this specific point has not been conducted, it seems unlikely that many people would be able to articulate the principle of fairness or to trace their feelings of obligation to it.

Because of the paucity of hard evidence concerning individuals' attitudes toward political obligation, I will concentrate my attention on a few specific aspects of obligation concerning which abundant evidence has been collected, especially the obligation to pay taxes ("tax obligation"). I will supplement my discussion of tax obligation with very brief looks at other aspects of political obligation, though the evidence in these areas is not as well established. It seems apparent that attitudes similar to those I will examine are widely held in regard to other burdens of citizenship. But because of reasons of space and because the evidence in these areas is even less clear, I will limit the areas I discuss.

In assessing feelings of obligation in regard to paying taxes and the other areas I will examine, it is necessary to attempt to determine the extent of people's beliefs that they ought to make sacrifices for the sake of public goods, though of course this spirit will be tempered by other feelings and desires.¹⁴ People's feelings about such matters are complex,

held, the degree of sophistication with which it held, etc. But it should be noted that the strength of such a presumption is greater for normative principles than for factual propositions, in regard to which it may be weak indeed.

14. In cases where obligations are overridden by other factors, individuals still have obligations. An excellent general discussion of obligations is found in Simmons, chap. 1. In regard to the obligations discussed below, the point to bear in mind is not that the subjects *willingly* contribute their share but that they have strong feelings that they *ought* to contribute—though for other reasons, generally rooted in self-interest, they are not willing, all things considered, to contribute.

and it is not always easy to distinguish feelings of obligation stemming from the principle of fairness from those with other sources. But strong evidence that a given feeling of obligation is rooted in the principle of fairness is provided by connections between the individual's feeling of obligation and his attitudes about the behavior of other people. The individual should be aware that he can provide the good in question only in conjunction with others, and so his view of his own obligations should be influenced by his views about the sacrifices others have been asked to make. The fact that A believes that B, C, D, and E are making sacrifices for the common good should strengthen his feeling that he too is obligated to contribute. Similarly, A's perception that the distribution of sacrifices is unfair, especially if he feels that he is being asked to bear a disproportionate share of the burden, should weaken his feeling of obligation.

The basic connections between A's feelings of obligation and his view of other individuals can be summed up in what we can call the "fairness thesis":

The strength of A's feeling that he is obligated to make sacrifices or bear burdens (in order to provide presumptive public goods to his society) will be heavily influenced by his views concerning the extent to which other individuals are making similar sacrifices or bearing similar burdens.

The relationship between A's willingness to sacrifice and his view of other people is of course rough. But I believe that this rough thesis is true. The evidence we will examine strongly supports it, while I believe that research in other areas would provide additional support.

III

A good deal of survey evidence has been collected in recent years concerning people's attitudes toward the payment of taxes. Though this supports the fairness thesis and so the principle of fairness, again, a caveat should be indicated. On the whole, this evidence is not as precise as we might like. Individuals' feelings of obligation are complex and influenced by numerous factors. In the absence of precise survey data, it is not possible accurately to assess the strength of obligations based on fairness or to compare their strength to feelings of obligation with other sources. Though the evidence will show that the principle of fairness plays a significant role in widespread feelings of obligation, at the present time it is not possible to specify the precise significance of its role.

According to most recent studies, the most important single reason for tax compliance is the fear of being caught cheating.¹⁵ But there can be little doubt that the principle of fairness also contributes significantly

15. S. Hansen, *The Politics of Taxation* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1983), p. 192; Y. Song and T. Yarbrough, "Tax Ethics and Taxpayer Attitudes: A Survey," *Public Administration Review* 38 (1978): 442-51, p. 446; cf. the results of M. W. Spicer and S. B. Lundstedt, "Understanding Tax Evasion," *Public Finance* 31 (1976): 295-305.

to widespread feelings concerning tax obligation.¹⁶ People's willingness to pay appears to be bound up with their awareness that payments go toward providing public goods.¹⁷ The fairness thesis receives strong confirmation from individuals' deep concern about the fairness of the tax system. Recent studies demonstrate that individuals are more willing to contribute their shares if they believe that everyone else—or most everyone else—is paying his. In their survey of 130 middle- and upper-income households in central Ohio in 1974, Spicer and Lundstedt tested relationships between respondents' propensities to evade and resist taxes and their perceptions of the following four factors: the severity of sanctions against evasion, the likelihood of detection, the inequity of the individual's exchange with the government when compared with those of other taxpayers, and the number of tax evaders the subject knows.¹⁸ Three relationships were supported by the analysis. The strongest relationship was with perceptions of inequity (propensity to resist, Beta = 0.34; propensity to evade, Beta = 0.24)¹⁹—especially the perception of extensive tax avoidance by the affluent.²⁰ This was followed by weaker relationships with number of evaders known personally (propensity to resist, Beta = 0.16; propensity to evade, Beta = 0.18), and perceived probability of detection (propensity to resist, Beta = -0.17; propensity to evade, no statistically significant relationship).²¹ There was no statistically significant relationship with perceived severity of sanctions.²² Spicer and

16. For various views regarding other factors that influence—and do not influence—compliance with tax laws, see Song and Yarbrough, pp. 447–48; Hansen, “Taxes, Benefits, and Public Opinion,” in *Political Benefits*, ed. B. Rundquist (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1980), pp. 195–99; D. Sears and J. Citrin, *Tax Revolt* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), chap. 3; Spicer and Lundstedt; C. Clotfelter, “Tax Evasion and Tax Rates: An Analysis of Individual Returns,” *Review of Economics and Statistics* 65 (1983): 363–73. For problems with the evidence concerning attitudes about taxation, see Hansen, *Politics of Taxation*, pp. 177–82, 203–7; A. Lewis, “An Empirical Assessment of Tax Mentality,” *Public Finance* 34 (1979): 244–57; E. C. Ladd et al., “The Polls: Taxing and Spending,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 43 (1979): 126–35. It should be noted that two of the surveys I cite were not conducted in the United States (J. Vogel, “Taxation and Public Opinion in Sweden: An Interpretation of Recent Survey Data,” *National Tax Journal* 27 [1974]: 499–513; Lewis, in Britain). Thus the evidence presented here is somewhat rough and should be regarded as such. For differences in attitudes toward taxation in different countries, see B. Strumpel, “The Contribution of Survey Research to Public Finance,” in *Quantitative Analysis in Public Finance*, ed. A. Peacock (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1969).

17. Lewis, p. 250; Hansen, “Taxes, Benefits and Public Opinion,” pp. 192–95; also Vogel.

18. Spicer and Lundstedt, p. 297.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 300–303.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 301.

21. Vogel's research indicates that acquaintance with tax evaders affects attitudes toward taxes and tax evasion through the “transmission of deviant norms, techniques of evasion and techniques of neutralizing deviant behavior to keep up a positive self-conception” (p. 512). Vogel does not discuss the possible effects such acquaintances could have on one's perception of the equity of the tax system.

22. Spicer and Lundstedt, pp. 300–303.

Lundstedt's results are consistent with (and were influenced by) the results of Strumpel's cross-national survey research concerning taxpayer reactions to tax policy in Europe. Strumpel notes the importance of the "gap between law and reality," which fosters "alienation, the perception of inequity, and refusal to cooperate."²³

Further confirmation was attained by Song and Yarbrough, who surveyed 287 respondents in eastern North Carolina in 1975. Their survey is especially interesting for the concerns of this paper because they attempted to measure "tax ethics," basically the feeling that one has an obligation to comply with tax laws and to correlate such attitudes with numerous factors. Respondents' levels of tax ethics were evaluated by assessing their responses to a series of seven statements. (For example, "Since tax 'dodging' hurts no one but the government, it is not a serious offense.")²⁴ The respondents were then asked to estimate what proportion of other taxpayers—most people, some people, a few people—commit each of a series of illegal acts, for example, not reporting some income, padding deductions, failing to file altogether. While relatively few respondents felt that most people or some people fail to file (3.7 percent and 20.6 percent, respectively), many more felt that most or some taxpayers commit less serious illegalities, for example, not reporting some income (20.8 percent and 43.1 percent, respectively), or padding business expenses (24.4 percent and 49.4 percent, respectively). Correlation of these results with those on the tax ethics questions revealed an interesting negative relationship: "Those who scored high on the tax ethics index tended to believe that others comply with laws more faithfully, and those who are inclined to believe that others cheat tend to have a low tax ethics score ($r = -0.279, P < 0.001$)."²⁵ Of the numerous correlations with tax ethics tested, this ranked fourth in magnitude, behind a positive correlation with income level ($r = .36$) and negative correlations with sense of alienation ($r = -.30$) and general mistrust of people ($r = -.2955$).²⁶ Accordingly, Song and Yarbrough believe that well-publicized mechanisms of tax avoidance are damaging to the national treasury not only because they result in a direct loss of revenues but also because they undermine the feelings of individuals throughout the system that they should pay their shares.²⁷ As it says in the initial Treasury Department report on tax

23. Strumpel, p. 28; cited by Spicer and Lundstedt, p. 295.

24. Song and Yarbrough, p. 444.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 446.

26. Though Song and Yarbrough do not note this, if we take all other variables into account in a multiple regression, their data may not indicate that tax ethics had much independent effect (see p. 447). (I owe this point to Steven Finkel.) Their analysis receives some support from the results of their inquiries into respondents' major objections to the tax system, where lack of fairness was the dominant concern (pp. 450–51).

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 450–51; also Hansen, *Politics of Taxation*, pp. 194–95.

reform, the present tax system “is perceived to be so unfair that taxpayer morale and voluntary compliance have been seriously undermined.”²⁸

In connection with current debate about tax reform and tax simplification, good evidence has emerged about general attitudes toward tax obligation. According to a national survey conducted in 1984 by Yankelovich, Skelly, and White, the high incidence of tax cheating in the United States is directly connected with the perception that the tax system is unfair. According to the survey, “The main reason for cheating is that people consider the system unfair.” They “resent a system which gives special privileges to a few, making it more costly and tougher on everybody else.”²⁹

I quote Simmons’s brief account of attitudes toward paying taxes: “It must be admitted that even in democratic political communities, [the benefits of government] are commonly regarded as purchased (with taxes) from a central authority, rather than as accepted from the cooperative efforts of our fellow citizens.”³⁰ The evidence tells against Simmons’s observation. If individuals believed that governmental services were purchased through the payment of taxes, then the key consideration in their attitudes toward their taxes would be their perception of the relationship between price paid and services received. However, individuals’ greatest complaint about the federal income tax is generally about its lack of fairness rather than that its rates are too high.³¹ In addition, as we have noted, individuals’ willingness to comply with the tax system correlates positively with the belief that other individuals also tend to comply. Thus it is clear that Simmons’s view does not adequately reflect the degree to which considerations of fairness influence feelings of tax obligation. To some extent, A cares about fairness because she knows that, if B or C or D doesn’t pay his share, that increases her own burden. But as we have noted, this is a relatively minor consideration for most people.³²

Attitudes confirming the existence of the fairness thesis are also encountered in other areas. Thus, in connection with the current concern about the federal budget deficit, it is widely noted that individuals are willing to make sacrifices in order to bring the deficit down, but only if

28. U.S. Department of Treasury, *Tax Reform for Fairness, Simplicity and Economic Growth, the Treasury Department Report to the President, Summary of Proposals* (Washington, D.C., n.d.), p. 1.

29. *Washington Post* (December 4, 1984), sec. E.

30. Simmons, p. 139.

31. Song and Yarbrough, pp. 450–51; also p. 449. For additional evidence against the purchase view, see T. Tyler, “Psychological Perspectives on Normative Issues: Theoretical Implications of Citizen Concerns with Fairness” (paper delivered at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, New Orleans, August 29, 1985); R. M. Dawes, “Social Dilemmas,” *Annual Review of Psychology* 31 (1980): 169–93; F. Crosby, “A Model of Egoistical Relative Deprivation,” *Psychological Review* 83 (1976): 85–113, and the extensive literature on relative deprivation that she discusses.

32. Also Lewis; Spicer and Lundstedt; cf. Vogel, pp. 511–12, but cf. p. 501.

they believe that everyone else will make similar sacrifices. To illustrate this point, I quote Mary McGrory, in the February 28, 1985, *Washington Post*: "Says Steve Cutler of Wessington, a farmer/legislator: 'We're willing to take a five percent cut to balance the budget as long as everybody else has to take that 5 percent cut.' . . . [Governor William Janklow of South Dakota said]: 'Our state will truly, truly support any politician of any party that will address the problem. We are willing to take cuts in every city, town, district, location, township. But we are not willing to take more than our fair share.'" Along similar lines, in a recent study of voluntary energy conservation schemes, Montgomery and Leonard-Barton write: "One major barrier to energy conservation is the fear that the burden will not be equally shared. . . . People are willing to tighten their belts a few notches only if they can be sure everyone is. . . . Congressman Thomas Ashley whose constituency is drawn from the ranks of the auto industry commented, 'Given the broad approach, I will find it easier to rise above parochial interests. My people will say, "OK, as long as everyone is hurt equally.'" "³³ Surveying the results of much recent research, Tom Tyler concludes, "If government is to elicit willing sacrifice on behalf of the polity it must impose its demands in a way that is perceived to distribute the burden equally."³⁴ Again, it seems evident that the examination of other areas where citizens are asked to bear burdens in order to provide public goods would present additional evidence for the fairness thesis.³⁵

In closing, I should call attention to the strong connections that have been noted between people's willingness to bear burdens to provide public goods and their concern with the behavior of other people. It seems to me that an adequate account of political obligation must explain why A's feeling that he is obligated to assume various burdens will be strengthened by his belief that other individuals are bearing similar burdens and weakened by his perception that they are not. I believe that this aspect of political obligation is especially well explained by the principle of fairness. This alone indicates the principle's importance and the extent of its contribution to feelings of obligation that are widespread.

33. D. B. Montgomery and D. Leonard-Barton, "Toward Strategies for Marketing Home Energy Conservation," Research Paper no. 372 (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Graduate School of Business, 1977), p. 14.

34. Tyler, "Justice and the Public Arena," in *The Sense of Injustice*, ed. R. Folger (New York: Plenum Press, 1984), p. 196; also pp. 219–20; see also Tyler, "Psychological Perspectives on Normative Issues."

35. Studies of cooperative behavior in n-person dilemma games report strong correlations between participants' propensity to cooperate and their beliefs that others will cooperate (see Dawes, pp. 187–88).