

# Billionaires

- 1 “It should simply be called the green list,” said the *Los Angeles Times* in an editorial. *Forbes* magazine released its annual tally of the people with the most greenbacks, identifying a record 946 billionaires whose mega-fortunes can only leave the rest of us green with envy. For the umpteenth year in a row, Bill Gates (net worth \$56 billion) led the way. Noting that the number of billionaires is up nearly 20 percent over last year, *Forbes* declared 2007 “the richest year ever in human history”.
- 2 “Excuse me for not celebrating,” said Tony Hendra in *Huffingtonpost.com*. In America, the gap between rich and poor is only growing, while the net worth of the world’s 4 billion poorest souls actually dropped, to less than \$35 each. Those who demand more equitable distribution of wealth are often derided as socialists or “bleeding hearts”. But when a handful of tycoons makes more in a day than much of the world makes in a lifetime, it’s tempting to start humming the *Internationale*<sup>1)</sup>.
- 3 “Perhaps we’d be less envious,” said Gregg Easterbrook in the *Los Angeles Times*, “if the super-rich were more 37.” Not counting the “sainted” Warren Buffett—who gave away \$44 billion last year—the 60 leading American philanthropists donated \$7 billion, out of their combined net worth of \$584 billion. That’s a mere 1.2 percent of their vast fortunes. Multibillionaires such as software magnate Larry Ellison, eBay founder Pierre Omidyar, and even that great champion of equality, financier and liberal activist George Soros, all gave less than 1 percent. Consider that in his day, industrialist Andrew Carnegie gave away 78 percent of his net worth. Billionaires can use only so many yachts, cars, and estates. Which raises the question: “Why do the super-rich hoard?”
- 4 “Simple—that’s how they keep score,” said Michael Kinsley in *Slate.com*. Most mega-capitalists are highly competitive, driven people who are measured—and measure themselves—by how much richer they are than everyone else. “People like me,” said investor Carl Icahn, “are out to win, and winning is money.”
- 5 “Nothing wrong with that,” said Arthur Brooks in *The Wall Street Journal*. Billionaires, by and large, make their billions by creating products, companies, and entire industries. Oracle founder Ellison, for example, has created thousands of jobs, fueled economic growth, and paid billions in taxes. If billionaires choose to give away fortunes, bully for them. But even if they don’t, they’re still sharing their wealth with the rest of us.

noot 1 Internationale: socialistisch bonds- of strijdlied (1871)

## Tekst 10 Billionaires

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- 1p 35 Why did *Forbes* declare 2007 “the richest year ever in human history” (paragraph 1)?  
In that year
- A *Forbes* succeeded in tracking down even more unwilling billionaires for their yearly record.
  - B no billionaire had ever had so much money as Bill Gates.
  - C some billionaires agreed to spend more money on improving the environment.
  - D there were more billionaires than there had ever been before.
- “Excuse me for not celebrating” (paragraph 2)
- 1p 36 Wat is volgens de schrijver de reden dat Tony Hendra deze opmerking maakte?
- 1p 37 Which of the following fits the gap in paragraph 3?
- A charitable
  - B extravagant
  - C modest
  - D realistic

3p **38** Geef van elk van de volgende personen aan of deze wel of niet genoemd wordt als iemand die een groot gedeelte van zijn vermogen aan goede doelen heeft geschonken.

- 1 Bill Gates
- 2 Warren Buffet
- 3 Larry Ellison
- 4 George Soros
- 5 Andrew Carnegie
- 6 Carl Icahn

Noteer het nummer van elke persoon, gevolgd door “wel” of “niet”.

“Why do the super-rich hoard?” (laatste zin alinea 3)

1p **39** Vat het antwoord samen dat in de tekst op deze vraag gegeven wordt.

*NB: een (letterlijke) vertaling van de tekst levert geen scorepunt op.*

1p **40** Which of the following summarises the content of paragraph 5?

- A** Billionaires generally want to keep a low profile on their donations to charities.
- B** Everyone benefits from the activities billionaires undertake to make their fortunes.
- C** It is only fair to let billionaires decide for themselves how to spend their money.
- D** People with slightly selfish personalities are more likely to become billionaires.
- E** Some people think billionaires should get tax reduction since they pay so much already.

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#### Bronvermelding

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