

WAR TAX

FROM PAGE 1

Millions of children live in poverty in the USA, most of them not white, which significantly lessens their chances of escaping destitution due to this country's prevailing racism. Dr. Charles Wilder, former director of Clatsop County Community Action Agency, once said that the War on Poverty has become the war on the poor. The upward flow of the nation's wealth must be reversed and the arid trickledown become a flood if this trend is to be overhauled. The growing disparities in wealth and living standards undermine our society and threaten civil disorder on a massive scale, which presupposes a grim specter of the future worse than terrorism.

Remedies for repairing our ravaged economy and reversing the intolerable social catastrophe it has precipitated are many, varied, complex and depend on reapplying the nation's fundamental principles with fresh interpretations. The reestablishment of a union culture and radical reform of labor laws should be a primary goal for the good reason that labor and production are at the heart of economic and political recovery, but across the board tax reform that drastically reduces the military budget and eliminates the two-tiered tax system in which the privileged get most of the breaks and the rest of the citizenry pay the bulk of taxes should be a serious consideration of returning power to the people.

The tax system must be reformed in favor of taxpayers, first guaranteeing each an accounting of their money used by every level of government, and that basic returns for that money be automatic priorities such as food, shelter and health/medical care. The present system of required payment of taxes without any accountability for their use by government must be reversed, which is possible with computerization of all public agencies. It will eventually be feasible in such a system that taxpayers have the legal power to determine where and how their tax moneys are spent.

Tax reformers usually attempt to allocate more tax moneys to environmental and poverty programs, and many ideas are creative such as energy and environmental taxes, as well as use and consumption taxes. Progressive taxation is the fairest redistribution of taxes from the wealthy to those most in need. But ultimately only a strong and determined tax revolt by a large number of ordinary citizens will bring about adequate and necessary reform.

The debate over income taxes is longstanding and bitter. Groups both politically right and left wish to abolish the current tax system, which they claim is unconstitutional despite the superseding of original intent by the 16th Amendment. With the exception of the Civil War, Americans did not pay income taxes until 1913, and withholding taxes deducted from wages was a World War 2 innovation. The question of whether taxes should be collected under any circumstances might be answered that they be apportioned, raised or lowered in consideration of the real needs of society rather than the corporate welfare the tax system has become.

The real power for change is revolt which, if conducted by millions, could probably even subvert the extortion (as well as tyranny) of withholding paychecks before workers ever see them.

It is quite probable the government would consider mass rebellion by taxpayers the worst conceivable form of terrorism and savagely respond with a campaign of extra-legal/militant counterterrorism. Which is why any such revolt would have to occur in stages and obviously involve the courts as well as simply refusing to file the forms, and must appeal to the most fundamental doctrines of the nation.

Paradoxically the theory of progressive taxation might as well be Marxist: each pays according to his/her ability according to their needs and obligations.

The theory is that what is taken out of society should also be proportionately put back — the more you get the more you are obliged to return. The reality is that those who reap the most give back the least, if they give back at all — and that which they keep is unproportionately made up by taxing those who reap the least.

The greatest tax upon the society is the enormous cash flow of public money that disappears into the private fortunes of those who loot the national treasury.

Theodore Roosevelt had it right when he said, "The real enemy of anarchist capitalists are socialist working people."

Thanks to Judith Griffis who provided the original insight that inspired this article.



P. E. FOSTER

BELLYACHE OF THE BEAST

BY KATE O'NEAL

"Nation faces \$21 billion deficit"

"Afghan war costs \$1.8 billion a month"

-FROM NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS

Fifty-four cents of every discretionary tax dollar now feeds the gargantuan maw of the military/industrial complex while basic services, education and infrastructure programs are being slashed from all state and federal budgets. It's not a coincidence.

"Our" military adventures are costing us more than we can afford. They rob us of the type of universal health care system that the people of every other industrialized nation on Earth benefit from. (Twenty other countries have a lower infant mortality rate than the U.S.) They have stolen our security because they have created people who know of no other way to defend themselves than to strike back at us with any means at their disposal.

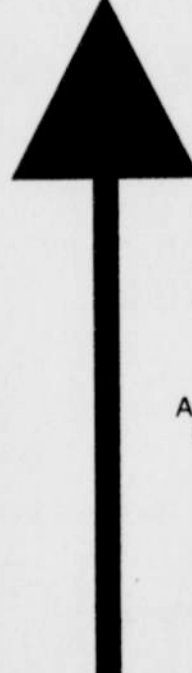
And what do "We the people" ever gain from these wars? Consider: we are 5% of the Earth's population and consume more than 25% of its resources. Yet a huge percentage of our citizens live in poverty. "In the last 20 years the overall wealth pie has grown, but virtually all the new wealth has gone to the richest 1% of the population," write Chuck Collins and Felice Yeskel in *Economic Apartheid in America*: "In the U.S. the top 1% of households now has more wealth than the entire bottom 95%."

The killing, maiming, polluting and extinctions that are a result of war are being committed in my name. But my friends, family and I aren't gaining anything from this barbarous insanity. It's clear to me that the people who are in control of our government don't represent you or me or the qualities we thought our country stood for. They are extremely wealthy oil men who know the price of everything but the value of nothing. They represent only themselves and they have created this pitiful dangerous world, a world that is the only home we will ever have.

Why don't we send them back to their mansions and insist our taxes go to develop technologies that are not fossil driven? (Does anyone still doubt oil is what these wars are mainly about?) Why don't we insist our national priorities be that every citizen in our country has a decent standard of living, that the minimum wage be a living wage, that our taxes go to rebuilding our crumbling infrastructure and creating a health care system we can afford, that we get our military out of other people's lands, that corporations pay a reasonable share of taxes (at present they pay less than 11%) and treat the Earth as the fragile, finite treasure it is.

Don't tell me the gazillions of dollars and millions of lives now wasted in the service of madness and destruction can't be better spent. Let's grab the steering wheel and slam on the brakes before we get to where we're headed.

Kate O'Neal lives in Grays River, Washington.




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