

Rich = No Taxes

For 2,400 Americans in the nation's highest income bracket that was the equation used to collect their taxes. The IRS reported that the 1993 figure (the most recent available) is up from 85 individuals and couples who paid no taxes in 1977. The number of Americans who made \$200,000 or more has grown 15-fold between 1977 and 1993, however, the number who paid no income taxes has grown by 28-fold during the same period. The same IRS report showed an additional 18,000 Americans with high incomes paid less than 5 percent of their income in taxes.

The Confusing Tale of Measure 47/Measure 50

As the Oregon Legislature moves closer to adjournment, Capitol watchers are having a hard time keeping up with the chameleon-like behavior of Measure 50. For anyone who may have been out of the country for the past year or unconscious, Measure 50 was the revised version of Bill Sizemore's Measure 47 (Cut and Cap) that the legislature sent to voters on May 20. Passage of Measure 50 should have brought this tale to an end, right? Guess again.

Just as there were two versions of Measure 47, over the last two months two versions of Measure 50 developed:

- ◆ Measure 50 as submitted to the voters, with an \$804 million tax cut; and,
- ◆ Measure 50 as amended by the House Revenue Committee four days before the election, with a deeper tax cut of \$877 million.

Pressure from a wide coalition, including OPEU finally pushed the Senate Revenue Committee to "rewrite the rewrite" of Measure 50 on June 13, 1997. The committee restored Measure 50 to its original form, which cuts taxes by \$804 million, not \$877 million in 1997-1999. This was accomplished by amending HB3710 which had created the deeper cuts in the first place.

Meanwhile, timber interests, seeing an opportunity for a tax break successfully lobbied to have a bill introduced that would "provide timber land owners the same tax relief" on their severance taxes that other tax payers will get on their property taxes under Measure 50. The bill which the House Revenue Committee approved to do this is HB3734.

Reps. Corcoran and Rasmussen voted "No" and introduced a minority report that exposes what's really behind timber's "me-too" clause of Measure 50. The report extends Measure 50 treatment to severance taxes, but amounts to only a 3% cut in total timber taxes.

HB3710 and HB3734 will have tremendous impacts on how Measure 50 plays out in Oregon's communities. State senators need to hear from OPEU members and their families about supporting the Senate Revenue Committee's amendments to HB3710. We also need to demand that House members oppose HB3734 and support the minority report.

April 15 Brings Out Tax Protests Around State

The last day to file federal and state tax returns sparked a number of tax protests around Oregon. Portland, Eugene and Ashland were just three of the communities that staged tax protests on April 15, 1997. Many of the events were organized by the

Oregon Tax Justice Coalition Working for "Fair, Adequate and Equitable" Tax System

The Oregon Tax Justice Coalition is a statewide coalition composed of unions, social justice organizations and community groups seeking to reform Oregon's tax system. The coalition was formed around a January, 1997 lobby day organized by Portland

Jobs with Justice, which drew together interested citizens and groups to present lawmakers with a very early message about the importance of making substantive changes to our tax structure. Since then, the coalition has grown to include over twenty organizations and is currently setting up a more permanent structure.

The coalition's goal is to see a "fair, adequate and equitable" tax system brought about through one or more initiatives in 1998. At present, the focus of attention is on equalizing the corporate income tax rate with that of the individual tax rate.

To get involved in the coalition or to learn more about what's wrong with Oregon's tax system, contact Tim Nesbitt at OPEU Headquarters at 800-452-2146 or 581-1505 in Salem.

May Tax Conference in Eugene Draws Full House

Over 200 unionists and community members concerned about tax reform attended the "Tax Justice Now!" organized by the Lane County Labor Council and sponsored by OPEU, among others. The forum included an overview of what's wrong with Oregon's tax system and a discussion of how we can fix it. The event is part of a growing movement in Oregon to make our state tax system fair, adequate and equitable. To order a tape of the conference speakers, call 541-741-4770.

Right: OPEU members and other community members join spoof benefit for "needy, greedy corporations" that don't want to pay their fair share of taxes.



interest in moving towards real tax reform in 1998 through one or more initiatives.

In Portland, OPEU members joined with Jobs with Justice to stage a benefit for "needy, greedy corporations." For more details about the coalition, call Tim Nesbitt at 800-452-2146 or 581-1505.