

Taxes

There will be government. In all of human history, any time, any place, someone always takes charge. If you don't participate in your own government, someone else certainly will, whether you like it or not. In small autonomous groups, leadership can be very unstructured, but the larger the group, the more structured government needs to be. At some point, the need arises to collect taxes.

It's not that we're paying too much taxes; it's that we're not getting our money's worth. For the U.S. government, there's no bottom line, no competition, and you can't get fired. There's no incentive for quality or efficiency. Our federal government has been rendered dysfunctional by severe bureaucratic alzymers, and, for the 4 years of Trump, it was being dismembered with nothing to replace it with but dishonesty, incompetence, and corruption.

There are a wide variety of methods of tax collection. In the U.S., we have a myriad of established systems of tax collection, and most of them are very inefficient and subject to corruption.

Income tax gathers all the money into one big pile and there's a free for all as our elected politicians squabble over how to spend it. Much, and sometimes most of it, is wasted and stolen. It's pathetically inefficient to collect. When you factor in all the time and money involved in collecting it, it costs almost as much to collect as it brings in.

Tariffs are just sales tax in disguise, have a lot of negative side effects, and are currently just thrown in the pile of money collected by income tax.

Property tax is the most insidious and cruel. For the homeowner living at the edge of poverty who can't put money aside or the bills don't get paid, it's outright fascist sadism.

Individually gathered taxes for specific purposes are inefficient, excessively bureaucratic, and consume a lot of paper.

Using the money collected with fines to pay the people who collect them induces constant temptation. It can heavily bias our police toward spending their time gathering money instead of thieves and dangerous criminals.

Sales tax, on the other hand, is simple to collect, is subject to very little cheating and theft, is much more transparent, and, since just about everything has a bar code, it does not need to be a flat tax and can be easily directed. The impact of any given product on the community could be taxed appropriately. The need for each tax would become much more transparent and quantifiable. The tax on produce could be directed straight to the department of agriculture. The tax on alcohol would be directed straight to the department of alcohol rehab. Fuel tax would go straight to the road department. Taxes on vehicle sales would go straight to the department of transportation...

Since the more you buy, the more you throw away, the tax for trash collection, recycle, and disposal would be fair and equitable.

Since the more you buy, the more energy and resources you consume and the more pollution you create, sales tax induces conservation.

Converting to sales tax instead of income tax would bring much of the underground economy into the tax base.

A serious luxury tax would separate the gluttonously wealthy from the industriously wealthy. Gluttons seldom earn their money and are a major source of pollution, so we should get our money back.

Taxes collected for law enforcement, fire protection, national defense, and other civic endeavors would become much more transparent.

The infrastructure for collecting sales tax is already in place, so the conversion would be very simple.

The devil's in the details. In the setup of the system, theft at the cyber level needs to be addressed. There could be endless squabble over who gets what if the political conversion is not done smoothly. It would be best done on as local a level as possible and would need to be phased in.

Capitalism inherently tends to concentrate the community's money into fewer and fewer hands, and, just as it did in the 1920's, they're not spending it on the welfare of the community. Money doesn't keep. If we don't take the money back and put it to work, it will soon become worthless, just as it did in 1929. Capitalism has failed rather badly in dealing with the unemployment caused by climate change, war, automation, and the current pandemic. A high percentage of the jobs lost to the pandemic will never come back, nor should they, as our morbidly obese economy is rapidly polluting us toward the point of extinction. We need a basic universal paycheck before this civilization unravels into massive war, famine, and disease, but the rich have all the money and they're not spending it. In just the last few years, America's billionaires have taken 13 trillion dollars out of the economy. We need to take it back. Raising the top tax bracket won't be enough. Our ultra rich can easily sidestep the IRS because the tax code doesn't classify most of their wealth as income. We need a serious and immediate outright wealth tax.