

Libertarian University: **TAXATION IS THEFT**

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The fundamental right of any man is the right to life, sustained by freedom of choice, and the right to control the property he earns through his efforts or voluntary exchange with other men. Any man has the right to defend, by force if necessary, his life, liberty or property. A man's existence or what he has earned is not the property of others. Man is not a slave to be exploited for the desires, whims or needs of other individuals. When the property of a man (his life, or that which sustains it) is taken from him by force, the action is known as THEFT.

One man has taken it upon himself to demand money of persons on the street. If they refuse, he assaults them and takes their money by force. This person is clearly immoral and is a thief. The person robbed is clearly a blameless, innocent victim.

In search of bigger game, the man gathers a group of friends who then label themselves the "syndicate." They proceed to terrorize small businessmen until they turn over "protection" money upon demand. Those who refuse meet with "accidents." Are the actions of this gang any less criminal simply because there were a dozen of them instead of only one? The only rational answer is that their actions would not be any different, that robbery is robbery and murder is murder whether committed by one man or dozens acting in concert.

Finding the "syndicate" at odds over splitting the loot, our man decides to take a job for a very large gang called the "Internal Revenue Service." He now declares that he is an agent of a larger group called "the government" and is empowered to seize money or property to satisfy alleged debts due "the government." Instead of being labeled a THIEF, our man is now called a TAX COLLECTOR. He now claims he isn't taking the money for himself (though he is paid handsomely and has little risk) but is collecting for "the Poor" or "defense" or for "the men on the moon." But is he now acting any more moral than when he was a lone thief or a member of the gangster "syndicate"? Like the criminal, the "tax collector" is taking money or property which does not belong to him and which the victim does not choose to give voluntarily. If the victim voluntarily supported the cause for which he is being taxed, there would be no need to tax him in the first place. A criminal will seize property if he wishes and a tax collector will do the same, throwing the victim in jail if he attempts to protect what is his.

"It is irrelevant whether another man steals by his own authority or with the sanction of a million others, whether he takes money for himself or for 'the poor' or for any other group which did not earn it. Theft consists of taking a man's property against his will, regardless of the beneficiary. If the individual has an alienable right to his own life, liberty and property, then morally his life and property are his own to do with as he pleases. It is just as immoral for a government to attempt to tax his earnings, regulate his business or draft his sons as it would be for some isolated individual acting on his own authority to do so. The association of men into a group called 'government' does not free them from morality or sanction actions otherwise immoral."

Here arises the myth that governments are empowered to do things that individuals are not. What things? Or, it is alleged, the majority has the right to rule over the minority. This concept could lead to dictatorship of the majority and genocide if carried to its logical extreme. That which a government may properly do is no different in essence from that which individuals may do. Governments are nothing more than a collection of individuals

organized for some purpose, preferably protection. If a single individual does not possess the right to do something, then there is no way that an association of individuals can suddenly possess this so-called right. All that which is immoral for the individual to do is immoral for a group of individuals to do, no matter how lofty the ends they proclaim or how divinely inspired they claim their association to be.

Taxes on the American people are now estimated to be 35% to 40% of the average man's income. If you are rich, or richer than most, you may pay a lot more. The graduated income tax feature adds to the injustice of taxation and hits hard at those who by their savings and their ability have shown themselves to be efficient satisfiers of the wants of man. Taxation is bad enough without adding special features which penalize the doers, the creators of wealth, the inventors, and the rest upon whom progress for all mankind depends.

Taxes are extorted for projects of which the "taxpayer" does not approve. They cause dislocation of scarce economic resources and retard growth. They enable the state to carry on all manner of anti-freedom activities. They permit the state to manipulate persons, or special interest groups, by helping them or harming them by tax regulations. It has been truly stated that "The power to tax is the power to enslave."

What is needed is not "tax reform" which is a euphemism for "tax him more and me less"; not more taxes on business which are, after all, ultimately passed on to the consumer; not more taxes on more things or on "bad" things like cigarettes, poor housing, or luxury cars; not tariffs or savings bonds or deficit spending or inflation or any other gimmick that politicians pull to hide the magnitude of their theft from the wage earner. What is needed is an end to taxes entirely!!!

It is argued that taxes are necessary to support services of government. It is claimed that garbage would lay knee deep in the streets if trash removal wasn't provided by government; that muggers and rapists would roam at will without government police on hand; that the commuter train and bus lines would cease to exist if turned back to private enterprise. Why, we might ask, would men be so foolish to allow such services to cease without the government's intervention? Do men go bare foot because the shoe industry is still a private operation? Do men forget to report to their jobs every morning because the government does not yet provide them with alarm clocks? Of course not. It is ridiculous to assert that rational men would fail to voluntarily support services they need if they were not forced to do so. And it is ridiculous, as well as immoral, to force men to support services they do not use and do not value, just because one man or group of men think they know what is best for everybody else.

Government services performed today could be provided just as well by free market enterprisers. People would pay for what they desire. No one person would be forced to work for the benefit of another (sometimes known as slavery) and no other person could expect to have that person work for him. Taxation is theft and should be abolished. Government monopolies must be removed so that entrepreneurs can freely compete and make taxation unnecessary. Only then will man be truly able to enjoy the fruits of his labor.

* from SOCIETY WITHOUT COERCION by J. Wollstein.

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