

# Down the Tubes: The Tax Man Cometh

Last week I filed my federal and state taxes.

The tax preparation service I use here, mostly for backup purposes in case of an audit, informed me by phone that the forms were ready for my signature and that I would owe the federal government just over \$1,000. Expecting to pay much more than that, I knew something had to be wrong in their calculations, and brother, was I right. When I arrived in the office, a different employee told me they'd had a glitch in the software and that in reality I owed over \$9,000 to the feds alone, including Social Security and Medicare payments for being self-employed.

My income is in the mid-five figure range. My Social Security payments account for about 20 percent of this income; the rest I earn from writing. I don't own a home, my children grew up long ago, and I have few other possible deductibles.

As a result, the Internal Revenue Service wants a check for about 20 percent of my income from this past year. Throw in state taxes, gasoline taxes, sales and sin taxes, vehicle taxes, and other such sundries, and I'm probably paying close to 25 percent of my income to local, state, and federal governments this year.

After the tax preparer hit me with this bombshell, I nodded and said, "Okay."

"You're taking this news awfully calmly," she said. I didn't have much of a reply, though I thought to myself, "Well, what else am I gonna do?"

Leaving her office and driving home, I grew mildly depressed. Even though the amount owed was a few thousand dollars more

than I was expecting, I suspected my tax preparer had made a mistake even before I arrived, and so I'd prepared myself mentally for this revelation and absorbed the blow.

But what did depress me was that the money I had worked so hard to earn—and I work every day of the week for hours a day—was just money flushed down the toilet as far as I was concerned. I had tried to save these earnings, watching what I purchased at the grocery store, keeping close tabs on my bank accounts, and engaging in extravagance only with my children and grandchildren. Four years ago, I was stony broke, but by dint of hard work and keeping an eye on my spending I fought my way back and could now look at my bank accounts with some lightness of heart.

And now a sizable chunk of my savings will go to a government that does little for me, that spends money without regard to our ever-growing mountain of debt, and that is sparking an inflationary trend that promises to become a wildfire. Inflation is a form of debt in and of itself, and as the prices of food and gasoline rise—and they may shoot up steeply in the next few months alone—the money left to me will be worth less and less.

So what lessons can I draw from these events?

First, I live under a federal regime that cares not a whit for Americans living outside of our capital. Our government not only benefits some of the wealthiest among us, but also enriches many of the politicians and civil servants who work in that government. Compare the net worth of senators and representatives when they first enter Congress to their wealth when they retire, and we find nearly all of them are rich as Croesus.

This same government claims to help low-income families, yet their giveaways and welfare benefits have left in their wake broken families, continual unemployment, and a permanent

underclass. Fifty years of failure are the fruits of our “war on poverty.”

Our government should exist for two primary purposes: to protect us from foreign adversaries and to ensure liberty by the rule of law and order. Here, too, the government to which I will mail my \$9,000 is failing on all fronts. Our southern border is awash with immigrants illegally entering the country. While the Chinese Communist Party is [building a navy inferior to none](#), those in charge of our own armed forces seem more focused on rooting out racism and using the military to achieve social change. In some of our cities, the collapse of law and order has brought an enormous spike in violent crimes and riots, and our justice system—even writing that word justice in this context brings a bitter smile—seems more intent on punishing the current administration’s political enemies than it is on maintaining the rule of law.

Usually, I try to end pieces I write for *Intellectual Takeout* on an upbeat note. To do so here required more thought and effort than usual, but here’s some advice for young people. Don’t do what I have done. Start saving and investing your money now. Look for write-offs on your taxes. If, like me, you’re either ignorant about financial matters, or disinterested, educate yourself or seek a professional to help you.

Do as I suggest, not as I did.

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