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April 16, 2001

The Fleecing of America

Now that the foolishness with the Chinese is over, at least for the moment, we can all turn our attention to another unfathomable controversy much closer to home. Perhaps as many as half of the American people are against an across-the-board tax cut. How do things like this happen in the land of opportunity?

Two statistics for you to ponder: First, according to the National Taxpayers Union, 40 cents out of every dollar you earn is taken from you by various forms of government. And right now, the tax burden on the average American worker is the highest it's been since World War II, as you know if you filed on time this year.

Yet millions of American workers are OK with this. They seemingly trust the government to spend the money wisely. More people voted for the spender Al Gore than the tax cutter George W. Bush. What the deuce is going on?

It is not like we are all rolling in take-home pay. The average American worker (there's that phrase again) has around \$1,200 in savings. Millions of us are living paycheck to paycheck with no guarantee that the paycheck is always going to be there. Simply put, we are *dependent* on other people for our economic survival. This is not a good thing.

According to the Tax Foundation, an analysis group, the price for a gallon of gasoline includes, on average, 43 cents for various taxes. Every time you make a long-distance call, the government gets a taste. Even if you get a vaccine from your doctor, it is taxed. Almost everything you do involves forking over cash to Uncle Sam.

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So why have we accepted this tax culture? After all, it is not like we are getting premium service for our money. The nation's public school system is tottering. The roads around most big cities look like those in Zambia, and the VA hospitals have been compared to torture chambers.

Read these examples and weep. The federal government under Bill Clinton sent a billion dollars to Haiti. Much of it was used to train a police force there. By most accounts, that newly trained Haitian police force is up there with Cambodia's as the most ineffective on earth. The police chief in Port-au-Prince recently told The New York Times he doesn't have enough money to put tires on the cop cars.

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The harsh truth is that our federal government spends so much money on so many things that nobody can keep track of it. And the wise guys know it. The Yeltsin family in Russia has been accused of looting millions in U.S. aid money. Now, I find that hard to believe knowing what kind of strict law and order guy ol' Boris is, but you get the idea.

I could list literally hundreds of examples of wasteful spending by the federal government. The Osprey Helicopter cost billions. Now some Army officers say it is too dangerous to fly. The Clintons spent hundreds of millions on travel -- can anyone tell me what Hillary accomplished on her two-week spring break trip to North Africa with Chelsea?

Come on, people, wise up here. We are being fleeced by taxes, and it is going to get worse. Somehow, politicians have convinced us that the government is the answer to education, medical care, foreign problems, retirement security, and on and on. This is a myth. The government should only be the safety net, not the savior

Did you know that there is no drug testing in most places for those receiving welfare payments? That means for nearly 50 years, substance abusers who don't work have been buying various substances with our hard-earned money. As a young reporter, I once did a story on "check day" in various parts of New York City. It was, and continues to be, the biggest day of the month for liquor stores and street dope dealers.

The federal, state and local governments are playing Three-card Monte with our paychecks. You see your gross earnings, but you'll never touch them. The shells move fast and loose all over the board. The feds need money for this, the state for that, and how about those local school taxes? The motion is dazzling, the game too fast to comprehend.

There is no question that this is a very taxing time in America. It is truly amazing that so many of us don't even realize it.

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