



Income tax has got to go

Lately I've been thinking about how I'm going to spend my first year's income after I graduate. I had it all figured out. I'd buy a car, some furniture, clothes, maybe food. But then my mother threw a wrench in the works by smugly asking a question that annihilated my dreams of a bachelor pad: "What about taxes?"

Of course! How could I have forgotten about taxes? I've had fifteen hours of finance, studying investments and taxes, but all that was just homework. I never thought of myself as a problem at the end of the chapter.

It was a shock to realize that almost 30 percent of the money I work for will go directly to Uncle Sam. That's like a professor telling me the highest grade I can make on an exam is a 70.

I started thinking about justifications for the government taking my money. The government provides certain services like highways and defense — I use them, so I have to pay for it. But 30 percent?

People have argued about taxes throughout history, and the rationale behind our tax system is that the government ought to tax people according to their ability to take from the society (buy things).

I will be a consumer in this country, but I also will be contributing to the society because I will be producing something that can benefit someone else. The government taxes me according to how much I produce.

Why does the government tax me according to how much I contribute to society? The more I work, the more I have to pay in taxes. Why should I work more? This doesn't seem very rational in a country that prides itself on promoting a "work ethic."

Sometimes the government puts specific taxes on products related to a specific government service. There's a tax



James Cecil
Columnist

on gasoline, for instance. The money collected through this tax is used to maintain highways (people who buy gas are going to be using the highways). Then there are the "sin" taxes on alcohol and tobacco. In this case the government figures that people are going to buy these things even if they have to pay more for them, so it's easy money for Uncle Sam. State and local governments use the sales tax to generate revenue so they can operate — the same way the income tax provides revenue for the federal government.

But why does the government levy a tax on people's labor? It would seem that government would want people to work harder, and what better way than to allow them to earn their salary — all of it, not just 70 percent.

Then how would the government operate? They should tax us according to how much we buy: a consumption tax.

It would work in the same way as the income tax, but they would tax you on how much you spend each year. Of course, there would be deductions for things like food, medical expenses, educational expenses, etc. But everything else would be taxed according to a bracket structure such as the one used for income taxes. Your level of consumption would be measured by your annual income minus your savings in that year.

With the income tax, investments and interest from savings are taxed as in-

come. While you may be getting a 10 percent return on a certificate of deposit from your bank, you're actually only getting two-thirds of that after being taxed.

Under a consumption tax, you would get the 10 percent on the investment and could leave it there, or put it in another investment, or spend it on one of the tax-deductible items (food, medicine, education, etc.). But you wouldn't be taxed until you spent it on a taxable good.

The income tax system has several technical problems with it that would be eliminated by a consumption tax. One problem is that when income from investments is being figured, the change in price of the investment is skewed by inflation. An investment may go up in price 20 percent over three years, but if the annual inflation rate is six percent there is no change in purchasing power — you really couldn't improve your lifestyle. But the income tax system will tax the 20 percent increase.

Also, the consumption tax would end the need for a corporate tax system separate from the individual's tax system. Corporations would be taxed according to how much they spend, just like individuals. But the corporations would be paying a higher rate because they would be in a higher tax bracket. With only one set of tax brackets for everyone, the system would be less complex and would cut down on the bureaucracy.

In general, a consumption tax would tax people when they take things from society (consume) rather than on what people put into society (produce). It also would give us more flexibility in deciding when we will be taxed (early in life or in retirement), whereas taxing income leaves us with no choice but to pay now.

James Cecil is a senior economics major and a columnist for *The Battalion*.

People have power to control their addictions

Addiction. No one is immune to it. It is basically a part of human nature. Few, if any people, can escape its tremendous reach. It is possible, however, to contain it.

The first thing that comes to mind when one thinks of addiction is drugs — cocaine, heroin, acid, marijuana, speed. Some are capable of producing addiction and some aren't. Drugs are easy objects to become addicted to. They give one a feeling of pleasure, a trip from reality. And we all wish to escape reality,

don't we? But illegal drugs aren't the only addictive drugs. The two most common addictive drugs are legal: tobacco and alcohol. Alcohol gives one a different reality, perhaps less intense than illegal drugs, but a different reality just the same. Tobacco is, well... easily addictable to.

There are other addictive drugs as well. Valium is a popular one, as is aspirin. Perhaps there is somebody out there who is addicted to cough syrup.

Although these drugs are not as destructive as others, they still can be addictive.

Why do people get addicted to drugs? For some, it is an escape from a perceived bad existence. For others, it's to be one of the crowd. Still others become addicted due to a psychological need for a crutch to help them through reality.

Another source for addiction is ideals. People become obsessed with certain standards and principles and opinions and ideas. They become so engrossed that they turn into fanatics and zealots, blind to any opposition. Their entire lives become centered around their particular ideal.

There is also money. To some people, it's the only thing that matters. It's what we go to college for. With money one can buy a BMW and a three story mansion and a membership to the country club, and one can have all one's material needs taken care of in luxury. And with money comes power — power to control, to manipulate, to create and maintain.

Love is a good (and popular) ideal to be addicted to. So are logic, religion, knowledge, war, peace, stagnation, apathy, radicalism and, everyone's favorites, conservatism and liberalism.

Mail Call

No fine arts

EDITOR:

James Cecil is upset because Texas A&M has no fine arts department. What a shame. From my experience at other schools, A&M may be a bit better off without one.

For one thing, art students have a propensity for making sculptures out of rusty exhaust pipes and discarded underwear.

After exhibition in Paris, where such breathtaking creativity invariably wins "best of show," the junk heap is brought back and shoved off into some out-of-the-way corner.

Later, some suspiciously limp-wristed administrator decides that the collegiate atmosphere would be enormously enriched by prominent public display of the neo-Dalian artform example and, voila! We're blessed with a surreal Sul Ross with dirty jockstraps and brassieres hanging off his ears, and mufflers in both hands.

You want fine art? Well, Texas A&M has the finest art anywhere! I should know because I married one.

But there's many more around the library or almost anywhere on campus.

I'll also suggest such other fine galleries as the Dixie Chicken (but not Duddley's), or the Texas Hall of Fame.

One thing's for darn sure — as with any art, you really can't take any class to help you "appreciate" it. The appreciation has to come from somewhere deep inside yourself, a genuinely spontaneous and natural feeling.

Perhaps that's why Texas A&M doesn't really need a fine arts department.

Clay Salisbury
Graduate Student

Batt irresponsible

EDITOR:

"By closing Texas Avenue to traffic Sunday afternoon, the cities of Bryan and College Station inconvenienced hundreds of motorists."

True, "city officials could have done a better job of notifying Bryan-College Station residents that the street had been closed," but obviously *The Battalion* didn't feel equally as responsible to notify the students at Texas A&M (who, by the way, are also Bryan-College Station residents).

I checked Thursday's and Friday's paper, and there is not even a mention of the Straight Shot. It's no wonder that we Aggies were so clueless when Texas Avenue did close. Since many of the students, faculty and staff at Texas A&M don't subscribe to the *Bryan-College Station Eagle*, doesn't the responsibility of informing the campus about local events fall on *The Battalion*? Is *The Battalion* simply a forum for stupid opinions (like mine) or is it a newspaper?

Just think of what a service *The Battalion* could have done if, on the front page of Friday's paper, the headline read "Texas Avenue to be closed Sunday afternoon." Plus, if *The Battalion* had prepared a map (like *The Eagle* did) many of us could have been better prepared.

The decision to close a major street for three hours to accommodate some runners might be described as stupid, but the decision of *The Battalion* not to publicize the Straight Shot before Sunday can be described in one word: *Irresponsible*.

David Mendoza
Graduate Student

Editor's note: The officials involved in planning the Straight Shot 10K run did not give *The Battalion* any information concerning the race or the closing of Texas Avenue.

Guns do kill people

EDITOR:

I am writing in response to Ben Freeman's letter concerning Dean Sueltenfuss' Feb. 13 column on gun control.

Mr. Freeman said that "guns don't kill people; people kill people." His refuge in this old cliché leads me to ask him if he believes in legalizing drugs. After all, drugs don't kill people; people kill people. Right, Mr. Freeman?

He then goes on to say that "a gun in your house is like national defense; you don't use it much, but you sleep better at night knowing it's there." He is forgetting one major difference between guns in your home and national defense: Your children do not have access to *The Button*.

He also compared gun control to ceasing the production of lawn mowers because someone may lose a finger. That's a swell comparison, but how often do you hear about a Zip-N that was held up by a guy wearing panty hose on his head, armed with a Lawn Boy power mower?

Finally, Mr. Freeman took a stab at Dean Sueltenfuss by saying, "I realize that the cost of acquiring information is rather high, but it wouldn't hurt for you to do a little research." I think, Mr. Freeman, that it wouldn't hurt for you to follow your own advice.

Ross Lambert '91

Letters to the editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for style and length, but will make every effort to maintain the author's intent. Each letter must be signed and must include the classification, address and telephone number of the writer.

The Battalion
(USPS 045 360)

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The Battalion is a non-profit, self-supporting newspaper operated as a community service to Texas A&M and Bryan-College Station.

Opinions expressed in *The Battalion* are those of the editorial board or the author, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Texas A&M administrators, faculty or the Board of Regents.

The Battalion also serves as a laboratory newspaper for students in reporting, editing and photography classes within the Department of Journalism.

The Battalion is published Monday through Friday during Texas A&M regular semesters, except for holiday and examination periods.

Mail subscriptions are \$17.44 per semester, \$34.62 per school year and \$36.44 per full year. Advertising rates furnished on request.

Our address: *The Battalion*, 230 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-1111. Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77843.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The Battalion*, 216 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station TX 77843-4111.

Todd Honeycutt
Columnist

Fantasies and dreams are also addictive. It's easy to create illusions of realities that one is afraid to achieve. Or perhaps by creating an elaborate fantasy one loses one's self outside of reality and cannot achieve anything.

Once there in a fantasy world, one doesn't want to break out. It's easier to live in it. People really can't get hurt because they withdraw from the outside. And fantasies are fun. You can do anything: become President of the United States, or a Klansman, or travel the world or run away to California and be a bum. You can fly or climb or write or sing or build or destroy. And you don't have to do anything in the real world. Why would you want reality?

And now we come to people.

People are the most frequent objects of addiction. By nature we crave others

— desire them. And we desire them for various reasons. Some people we desire for companionship and compassion. Some people we are addicted to for a perceived love and devotion. And we all desire others to save ourselves from loneliness.

Perhaps addiction to people is the worst addiction of all. People and relationships do not last forever. And many among us seem to want them to last. When they crumble, those who are addicted crumble with it. They wish to die because they think that their lives are incomplete and will never reach previous heights. They cannot simply go on living; they must live in an abyss.

Addiction is not necessarily evil. It can be positive and constructive, or ruinous and possessive. The quality of addiction depends on the intensity of addiction, the amount of control and the context of the addiction. It also depends on the pleasure derived from it. In the end, addiction is a personal choice, and you are the only one who can possibly control it.

Todd Honeycutt is a sophomore psychology major and a columnist for *The Battalion*.