

There must be an alternative to the income tax



Dean Sueltenfuss
Opinion Page Editor

Oh boy — it's tax day.
And if you're like I am, you waited until today to dig out your W-2 forms and start filling out your income-tax return. (Actually, if you're like I am, you spent three hours rummaging through a 4-foot pile of dirty clothes and found your wadded up W-2 forms in the back pocket of a pair of Wranglers you wore three weeks ago — but on with our story.)

While I was filling out my tax return, I began to wonder about the nature of the income tax. Why do we have it? Why should we be taxed for working? Exactly what the heck is the government trying to pull on us here anyway? Just who the hell do those egghead, communist legislators of ours think they are? All IRS agents must die!

Putting my anger to productive use, I began to consider alternatives to the income tax. Perhaps I could come up with an idea that would make it obsolete, I thought.

I thought up six alternatives to the income tax that will keep our government rolling in the dollars. Here they are:

1. Convict Donald Trump and H. Ross Perot on charges of being rich, pompous asses. Then confiscate all their property and put it up for auction. This should raise at least \$45 billion.

If the government still needs more money, they could put Trump and Perot in dunking booths and charge people \$150,000 per throw, which should raise a few billion more.

2. Quit conducting stupid surveys that cost millions of dollars.

The IRS recently conducted a \$2 million dollar survey to find out exactly how long it takes the average person to fill out their 1040 tax form. Surveys such as this are useless.

Here's an example of the kinds of questions responsible surveys should answer: Exactly how long does it take for a legislator to change his mind about appropriating money for stupid, \$2 million studies when a 312-pound guy named Bubba is whopping him upside the head with a 3-foot section of two-by-four?

3. Fire Vice President Dan Quayle's staff and send him on a three-year diplomatic mission to Mongolia.

This would save the United States millions of dollars, not only because Quayle's staff won't have to be paid, but because Quayle would be in a place where he couldn't speak the language.

This would save the government two or three million dollars because it wouldn't have to pay for that expensive libel/slander insurance anymore (which is needed to cover lawsuits resulting from Quayle putting his foot in his mouth every time he says something).

4. Fine the officers and directors of Exxon \$100 billion for being irresponsible, slow and just plain stupid.

If this doesn't raise enough money, we can dump Exxon officials into a vat of oil and let them try to swim around in it. (Tickets for watching this performance would be sold for the low, low price of \$112,000.)

5. Sell Alaska back to the Russians.

Sure, Alaska is a great state. But it's such a mess now, it's hardly worth keeping. Anyway, the Soviet Union is probably more concerned about cleaning it up than our government is, so there's no reason not to sell it back to them.

6. Fire William Bennett and appoint Nancy Reagan as America's new drug czar. Bennett is spending entirely too much money in the fight against drugs. But even worse, he's not winning.

We need to return to the old days when Nancy was heading America's war on drugs. Sure, "Just Say No" didn't work any better than Bennett's banning of guns, but at least it didn't cost anything to enforce.

Well, those are my six proposals — but there are many more out there. If you think of any, please call your local IRS office — I'm sure they'd appreciate the input.

Dean Sueltenfuss is a junior journalism major and opinion page editor for The Battalion.

Mail Call

Need help packing?

EDITOR:
In response to J. Frank Hernandez' column on the Corps of Cadets in the Monday, April 10 Battalion, and to all others in the past that have "complaints" about Texas A&M, the Corps and the traditions of this University — if you knew about A&M before you came here, then shut up and let others of us who chose to attend this University enjoy it.
Why did you come here, anyway? You can

choose any number of other "world-class" universities to attend. We like it the way it was.
Every heard of "Texas A&M — love it or leave it"?"
We don't need radicals at this school for the good old boys. Let me know when you're leaving — I'll help you pack your bags.
Carol Landry '87

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.

Those rip-off artists are getting trickier each day

When Jim Pell saw the envelope in his mailbox, he felt a flutter in his stomach. The envelope looked official, like something from the government.

And he knew that it could not be good news. It never is. It's always something like, "You made a mistake in your tax return," or "You are going to be audited" or "You failed to fill out the proper form."

When he opened the envelope, his fears were realized. Out fluttered an official-looking form with boxes to be filled in.

"The first thing I thought when I saw that was 'What did I do wrong, and how much is it going to cost me,'" Pell said.

Then he looked at the letter that came with the form. Across the top were big black letters saying: "Federal Record Service Corp., Birth Records Division," with a Washington, D.C., address.

And beneath that it said, in equally big black letters:

"Important Notice:
"New federal legislation requires that all dependents reaching age 5 by the end of the tax year must be listed by Social Security number on your 1988 income tax return."
"Records indicate that your newborn child may not have been registered with the Social Security Administration. It is important that your child be issued a Social Security card."

The letter went on to say that if Mr. Pell filled out the form and sent \$10, they would process the form and get his child the necessary ID number.

"Then I read it again slowly," he said. "And I realized there was nothing official about it. These were just some pri-

Mike Royko Columnist

vate operators looking for somebody gullible."

Exactly. It's the old official-looking-letter trick, which has become popular among all kinds mail-order hustlers.

In this case, the hustlers who call themselves the Federal Record Service Corp., in Washington, D.C., were being truthful. But only up to a point.

It is true that the tax laws require that a taxpayer who claims a child 5 years or older has to list the child's Social Security number.

Among other reasons, it prevents divorced parents from claiming the same child.

But what the letter didn't say is that you don't have to pay something like the Federal Record Service Corp. to get you the number.

A Social Security official said: "The problem people have with them is that unless they read the fine print, they're liable to believe that they're connected with the government or that you have to go through them to get a Social Security card."

"They don't. All they have to do is call the local Social Security office and ask them to mail the forms, or they can go directly to the office. And it doesn't cost them anything."

"These companies just act as middlemen, using the authorization form they send people. Some of them charge as much as \$40 for a service people can get free."

Is it legal? Undoubtedly, yes. But if enough people overlook the buried disclaimer and are intimidated by the letter's official appearance, the scam can be profitable.

My guess is that it's run by some meatball who used to sell used cars until he brought a personal computer that does desk-top publishing.

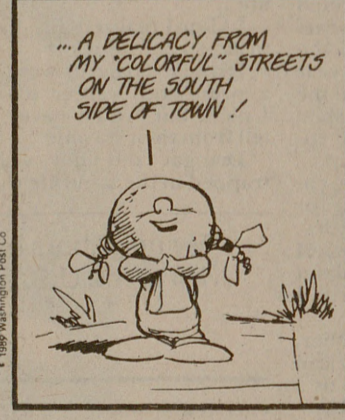
So if you get a letter from this outfit, don't panic. But don't throw it away, either.

See, there's an envelope that comes with their material. And if you send the envelope back, they have to pay the postage. So throw away everything else away, but seal the envelope and drop it in a mailbox. At least you'll cost them 25 cents.

And, if the mood strikes you, feel free to enclose an obscene note. It would be appropriate.

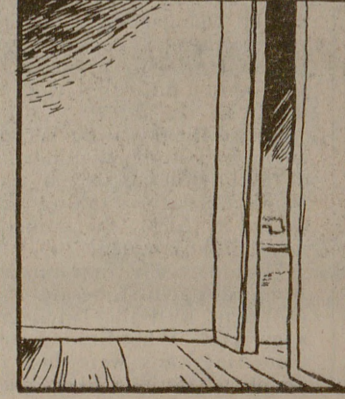
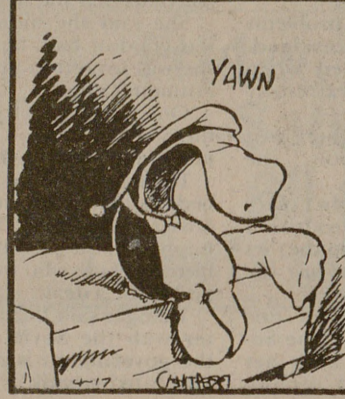
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BLOOM COUNTY



by Berke Breathed

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