

Are These Our Neighbours?



People who are concerned about taxation

Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?

Matt 22:1, Mark 12:14, Luke 20:22

Pay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and God what belongs to God.

Luke 20:25

Definitions expanded

Taxes are levied against either the income or the property of persons or organizations.

Definition:

A compulsory financial contribution imposed by a government

The most common form of tax today—income tax—was first introduced as a temporary measure following World War I, when more and more people became wage earners.

Taxes are divided into two categories, direct and indirect. The former are imposed on income, land or real property. Indirect taxes are imposed on consumption.

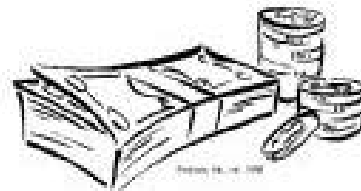
Taxes are also defined as being either progressive or regressive. A progressive tax increases the percentage rate of tax with the amount taxed, i.e. collects more from those better able to pay. A regressive tax is such that no distinction is made as to income or worth of the person, so that the percentage rate of tax increase is uniform. An example is the flat tax. People with limited incomes are burdened by this method.

Reasons for taxation

1. To fund public services which are part of government's economic and social goals, such as education, health, and trade.
2. To provide protection to a country's population, through the police or military.

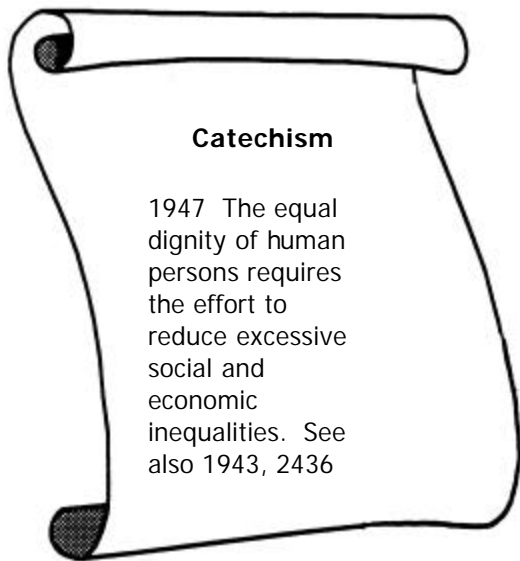
Tax reform

This has been advocated by many individuals and groups, often reflective of their political viewpoint, on the grounds that our present system is overly complex or burdensome. High tax rates based on the progressive system punish or deter those who successfully accumulate wealth in any material form.



Concerns

1. Abuse of complex taxation regulations by skilled professionals may enhance the lifestyle of a select wealthy few.
2. If the wealthy do not pay a reasonable share of government costs, then programs must be cut or taxes on middle and low income people must be increased.
3. Wealthy or highly skilled people who object to progressive taxation may move to other provinces or countries.



Catechism

1947 The equal dignity of human persons requires the effort to reduce excessive social and economic inequalities. See also 1943, 2436

“Whoever hopes a faultless tax to see, hopes what never was, is not and never shall be.”

Alexander Pope

“To take from private citizens under the guise of taxation more than is equitable is unjust and inhuman.”

Leo XIII Rerum Novarum 1891

References

Canadian Taxpayers’ Federation, Calgary. 1-888-703-5553

Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2717 Wentz Avenue, Saskatoon, S7K4B6 978-5308.

Fraser Institute, Vancouver 1-800-665-3558

Ten Tax Myths, Murray Dobbin October, 1999

Canadian Taxpayers Federation , 105-438 Victoria Ave., Regina S4N 0N7 1-800-565-9116.

What would they do with the Surplus? Armine Yalnizyan, November, 2000

Speaker Resource

For politically diverse viewpoints contact both references 1 and 2 above.

Contact Canadian Customs Agency (Revenue Canada).

Local candidates to political office.

Discussion

1. What is your definition of responsible taxation?
2. Should governments increase taxes or cut programs rather than use addictive methods such as gambling as a means of supporting programs?
3. Should Christians support the tax system? (Am I my brother’s keeper?)
4. What is the difference between tax avoidance and tax evasion?
5. How can people with moral views on the use of their tax dollars for abortion, nuclear weapons, defense industry make their views count?
6. Which programs should be cut? By how much?

Action Suggestions

1. Speak out against government power that unjust taxation might bring?
2. Write or meet with elected officials to express your concern.
3. Join or support a tax reform group that advocated the kind and extent of taxation you believe is morally acceptable.
4. Organize or support groups demanding a strict and visible accounting of tax monies, raised and spent.

