

# RELAX! IT'S ONLY A TAX

By Fred Hobbs

All manner of emotions well up inside the American income taxpayer when the deadline for filing approaches. Fear, loathing, sorrow, dread--maybe anger, often anxiety even if there is no rational reason to feel anxious.

How carefree the founding fathers (and their wives, the founding mothers) must have felt. From 1791 until 1802, the U.S. government had no income tax. It was supported by internal taxes on such items as distilled spirits, carriages, refined sugar, property sold at auction, corporate bonds, tobacco and snuff.

Hey, what ever happened to snuff? It's too bad the government today can't rake in enough dough from snuff to offset at least some revenue from us beleaguered income earners.

In 1862, the first income tax law was passed, mainly to support the Civil War effort. That same year, the office of Commissioner of Internal Revenue was established. The "good commish" in some form has been after us ever since, except for a twenty year period in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. That's when the Supreme Court ruled that income tax was unconstitutional because it was not apportioned among the states. In 1913, the income tax was made a permanent part of the lives and livelihoods of Americans by passage of the 16<sup>th</sup> amendment to the Constitution.

Most folks should have no particular quarrel with the concept of a Federal income tax. Of course, it can be imperfectly and in some instances, unfairly applied. These are issues that can be resolved by reason and common sense if and when those virtues ever return to the big "circus tent" in Washington, D.C.

In the meantime, can't we just relax a little? We should enjoy all the privileges and accommodations offered in American life. They don't come free and mostly they don't come cheap. The price we pay is fairly modest, though, compared to the value received.

Tax cheaters and tax evaders don't deserve any sympathy or special treatment. But there is one outlet that surely can make the honest citizens who are overly wrought concerning their income taxes at least enjoy a chuckle or two. That relief comes from the mouths of the late night TV comics.

Here's a sampling that may serve to sooth the frazzled nerves of the harried taxpayer:

From Jimmy Kimmel: "Tax Day is the day ordinary Americans send their money to Washington, D.C. and wealthy Americans send their money to the Cayman Islands.": Noting that April 15th, the normal deadline, is a Sunday, and that returns don't have to

be in the mail this year until Tuesday, the 17<sup>th</sup>, Kimmel reminded viewers: “you’ll have two extra days to dig through restaurant dumpsters for receipts.”

And, on a more sardonic tone, for which he is noted, David Letterman also referenced the later date: “Two things you need to know about taxes. “They’ve extended the deadline until April 17 and when you write your check, just make it out to China.”

Taxpayers, good luck and relax, it’s only a tax!