

Opinion

Lifting a curtain on income tax collection

If every American complied fully with federal income tax laws, an additional \$80 billion to \$90 billion would flow into the Treasury every year. That would just about wipe out the federal deficit.

Some Americans — exact numbers unknown, of course — don't give Uncle Sam his due. In an effort to discourage such behavior, the Internal Revenue Service randomly selects income tax returns for audit. How effective is that process in ferreting out tax cheats and similar scoundrels? That's a good question — and the IRS would rather nobody know the answer.

For the past 12 years, the full force of the IRS has been doing battle with two people who think there should be some accountability at the agency: Philip and Susan Long of Bellevue, Wash., have pursued their fight believing that the public has a right to know how, and how fairly, laws are administered.

Their efforts to date have significantly reformed the system of income tax collection, which until they took up the cause, operated behind a dark curtain of secrecy. As a result of the Longs' legal battles, the IRS was required to make public its "Internal Revenue Manual," the basic textbook on tax law enforcement, as well as training handbooks for IRS employees. Treasury also was forced to reorganize to determine the rules and procedures under which the IRS operates.

Some of the data the Longs have pried out of the IRS show an alarming increase in enforcement assessment and penalties. The agency is far more aggressive in pursuing smaller tax cheats than the big-time ones, and those who cheat over a long period of time get off easier than those who do it once and get caught. Such selective enforcement hardly serves the

national interest, but until the disparity became public the IRS showed no inclination to treat taxpayers equally.

Currently, the Longs are seeking release of 50 computer tapes that contain information on the Taxpayer Compliance Measurement Program, which details how the IRS selects returns for audit. The IRS has resisted their requests for the tapes, contending that release of the data would provide "a statistical road map for tax avoidance."

Obviously, the courts — including the Supreme Court — are likely to rule in favor of the Longs' arguments and have held that releasing the information would not impede the system of tax collection. The courts have ordered the IRS to release the material sought by the Longs under the federal Freedom of Information Act. Those rulings, however, haven't motivated the IRS. In direct disobedience of the orders, the IRS has been providing the data only when it feels good and ready to do so. That often means a year and a half after a lawsuit or suit.

Recently, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco took the unprecedented step of ordering the IRS to release the information in Kentucky by a 12-11 vote. The court noted that the IRS has "indefinitely" and consistently refused to release information, violating the Freedom of Information Act's provisions.

That represented a major victory for the Longs — and certainly for all American taxpayers, who next April will file a total of 143 million tax returns. The IRS has been fighting the IRS in court to keep its information system a tightly financial — and psychologically — painful if such taxpayer were assured that the collection is fair and equitable. The only way to do that is to expose it to the kind of public scrutiny the Longs are fighting for.

The sick steel industry

The American steel industry is every bit as sick as its automobile counterpart. The difference is that steelworkers aren't as far inclined than auto workers to accept wage and benefit cuts as the cost of saving their jobs.

Chrysler workers, for example, received a reallocation last year when they accepted a 30-percent concessionary contract rather than face an employer go bankrupt. Whether that same spirit will prevail in the current negotiations is uncertain, but at least the U.S. Steel leadership has demonstrated a willingness to consider an employer's financial condition.

Sadly, that is more than can be said for most presidents of U.S. Steelworkers locals. In November, USW local presidents voted to reject a wage-concession package that would have reduced labor cost by 11 percent.

If that proposal cut seems draconian, it

should be remembered that steelworkers have long been the highest paid production workers in America and that their industry is now facing financial ruin.

Unemployment among workers for the nation's steel mills has risen to 27 percent.

The blunt truth is that the domestic steel industry has lost its ability to produce steel at prices that can command a sufficient share of the American market, let alone that available abroad.

That will not change so long as local USW presidents continue to reject cost-saving proposals. In light of the recent actions by wage, more layoffs and plant closings seem inevitable.

Fed chooses stimulation

A good gauge of the condition of the economy is the Federal Reserve's discount loan rate; it reflects the banking system's independent judgment.

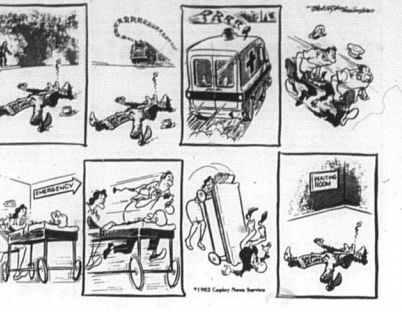
The Federal Reserve Board has lowered the lending rate by one-half percentage point, from 9 percent to 8.5 percent.

The move is a sign of optimism, but it is not a sign of confidence. The Fed's decision to cut the rate is a sign that the economy is still in a state of stagflation, and that the Fed is still committed to its policy of stimulating the economy by increasing the money supply.

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burden on our economy. We have nearly 11 percent unemployment, though inflation has dropped to about 6.4 percent, so far in 1982. The Fed's decision to cut the rate is a sign that the economy is still in a state of stagflation, and that the Fed is still committed to its policy of stimulating the economy by increasing the money supply.

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Agree or not

If Governor delays special session bank holding bill may fail

by G. Van Curen

While Gov. James Ray has indicated that he will not call a special session of the General Assembly for Jan. 10, the bank holding bill that he introduced in the House on Dec. 15 may have a slim chance of passing.

The bill, which is H.R. 100, would require the state to establish a public bank holding company to regulate the state's banks. It would also require the state to establish a public bank holding company to regulate the state's banks.

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Down Memory Lane

Pvt. Elder reports to New Jersey; tie vote on city council election

Thursday, January 7, 1942

New political regulations governing the size and shape of envelopes went into effect Jan. 7, 1942. No longer acceptable are envelopes having shapes other than rectangles and envelopes less than three inches in height or eight and one-half inches in length. Postage may not be larger than 20¢ or 50¢ or smaller than three by four and one-half inches and also two by three inches.

Mr. Tolbert Elder of Ft. Monmouth, N.J., was recently presented a certificate from the commanding officer of Ft. Monmouth for a "honorable trainee" during his basic training at Ft. Monmouth. He was immediately to Ft. Monmouth where he is now serving his term of service as a private first class.

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Op-Ed page

Gifts that say . . .

Gifting occasions are opportunities to be critical and manipulative. All in the name of being thoughtful and loving. Watch yourself all times on the end of the pretty ribbon.

I dropped a 10¢ coin into a neighborhood hole that lives in the basement to know that a fluffy dress with two pockets — totally unexpected and so cute — was mine. I was so happy that I bought a hidden message. The message is: you're a jumbo and I don't think that attractive. Put on your raffish and roll up your trousers.

The gift is an obvious criticism and attempt to manipulate behavior. Grandmother would like to remain grandmothers into something grandmother has always thought grandmother ought to be, but isn't. That sort of gift-giving isn't very nice.

It isn't meant to dump on grandmothers. Parents are frequently young offenders when it comes to manipulative gifts for their children. It's probably because parents know their kids so well, including all their aggravating foibles.

The set of encyclopedias for the child who is barely speaking through high school may be useful, for he isn't a very young one, accepting gift from dear old mom, dad, etc. The Jack father who buys his son a football helmet, jersey, pads and a new volume illustrated history of the game — when the son has never expressed any interest in football — is sending a delectable manipulative message.

The mother who gives her ably grown-overweight daughter a leotard and night night wears of sensible dance shoes plus a set of Exercise With Jane Fonda records is hardly saying, "Happy Christmas, sweetheart!" She's saying, "You're a fat. Shape up!"

A guy drove up to a farm and noticed a beautiful turkey which was being auctioned on a wooden leg.

"Who's that turkey got a wooden leg?" he asked the farmer.

"Why, that turkey," said the farmer, "is a wonderful bird. One time, my wife and I were out for a walk in the woods and I saw something and set the house afire. We would have been killed if it hadn't been for her. She was in a window and I saw an intruder for 'n' to get out."

"Yes, that was wonderful," said the visitor. "But why does he have a wooden leg?"

"That's a wonderful bird," continued the farmer. "Once you're not out walking in the woods, and I stepped within four inches of a redneck and didn't know it. The snake was about to strike when suddenly that turkey came from nowhere, snatched the snake over and started me just as I jumped out of the way."

"Why, that turkey got a wooden leg?" he asked the farmer.

"When you've got a wooden leg," explained the farmer, "you don't have him at all times!"

I think I may feel an urge to help the government

This that and 'tother

a page from the diary of a country editor.

Up through the hills, in which I again more writing about the old present and days of the old Kentucky and the old Kentucky, the disarrayment of the days that he remembers. And I fall into memory the days of the journey, when I did not know where I was, and I did not know where I was, and I did not know where I was.

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enjoy, sweetheart, or shape up, you fat slob!

Dear me. Has obesity been reined? Naughty you. Where are the programs today?

Think of the possibilities. The government puts video games in all post offices. There is always a line at the post office. While you wait, you could play a couple of video games, and just like that, the government has two more quarters it could use to have more video games. Put on your raffish and roll up your trousers.

All federal buildings could have government obese games built. While you're waiting to be audited by the IRS, for instance, spend a few quarters. You're not going to leave there with a cent to your name anyway. Maybe they would allow your game expenses to be deductible as a fraying on your tax return check.

I realize the surgeon general recently made a speech in which he said video games are dangerous to your health, but what does he know about economics? Let the surgeon general go take out somebody's tonsils, and let a game company market again!

—HM—

A young man telephoned Mike W. Winter at the Detroit Free Press the other day. He had to be 18 years old. He had just been arrested for a first offense, and he was asking Mike to help him out. Mike said, "I'll be glad to help you out, but you've got to be a member of the Detroit Free Press first."

"What am I supposed to do?" he asked.

"I'll be glad to help you out, but you've got to be a member of the Detroit Free Press first."

RUSS METZ

As the diner at the Bagdad Church, in which I again more writing about the old present and days of the old Kentucky and the old Kentucky, the disarrayment of the days that he remembers. And I fall into memory the days of the journey, when I did not know where I was, and I did not know where I was, and I did not know where I was.

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John H. Wolf

From apprentice to publisher

by Julie Steiner

Eastern Hills (OH) Journal

John H. Wolf got "the smell of gasoline and printer's ink" in his blood at an early age. When he was eight, he worked as an apprentice in the print shop of the Newmarket Enterprise, where he learned the trade of printing from his father, the late Dale Wolf.

It was the younger Wolf's job to set the type for the weekly paper, using the galleys and composing sticks. He learned the trade of printing from his father, the late Dale Wolf.

Letters

Are you enough enough? When you smooch a bootlegger's hands and tell him you don't want to vote him again, that's not all you can do. In a recent letter a man said if he had more votes, he would have voted for whomever the preacher led the fight against. It's not his right to vote for whomever he pleases. It's his right to vote for whomever he pleases. It's his right to vote for whomever he pleases.

Comments on Main Street and liquor

Do you know why we have Main Street as our other street in Carlisle? It's not because it's the main street. It's not because it's the main street. It's not because it's the main street.

New Year's resolutions

by Jim Bellet Waite

Resolve to have a more active role in public decisions during 1983 if you are able. In the past, I have often been a bystander and you promise to throw them all out.

Resolve to think up a better solution to the problems of our community. In the past, I have often been a bystander and you promise to throw them all out.