

Deficit Reduction Made Easy: Change Tax Day

Peter H. Schuck

*As I pondered o'er my forms
Seeking haven from tax storms
I reached judgments quite severe
'Bout the pols who put me here.*

*Taxes are beyond the ken
Of any of us mortal men
Schedules we can't comprehend
Calculations without end.*

*Cross-reference leads to cul-de-sac
Definitions double back
Instructions that do not instruct
All to take my usufruct.*

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*How can ordinary Joes
Deconstruct IRS prose?
Who (save those with MBAs)
Can navigate this maddening maze?*

*1040 is the hardest part
But that, alas, is just the start
States, of course, must have their say
Each taxing in a different way.*

*Heaven help the folks like me
Who live in A and work in B
Then New York City, for my pains,
Takes a piece of what remains.*

*As soothsayer, I must estimate
Or be fined next year for paying late
If, God forbid, dependents work
I file more forms – a parent's perk.*

*I guess I have myself to blame
For playing in this ghastly game
I could have hired a CPA
To get me through this dismal day.*

*But since I trod those many miles
Compiling records, forms, and files
It seemed that I should be the one
To frolic in this springtime fun.*

*Justice Holmes said long ago
(When governments small kept taxes low)
Tax was civilization's price
Purchasing what Holmes found nice.*

*`Tis true enough, but Holmes omits
To mention that those benefits
May cost us more than they repay
When politicians join the fray.*

*They love to spend our hard-earned wealth
It buys them votes - but not by stealth
For we, like fish, respond to lures
The more one gleams, more it obscures.*

*Those lures add up to deficit
And though it's dropping bit by bit
Fiscal balance - 'o halcyon day
Is always several years away.*

*We warm to politicians' smile
Their promises do us beguile
We forget that bills come due
(I pray mine will go to you).*

*The problem's ancient, I suppose
Yet simple answer I propose
The goal? Forge links `twixt choice and cost
Tightening discipline we have lost.*

*How, you ask, can this be done?
Can deficit wars be truly won?
Can voters learn that what they buy
Is what on Tax Day makes them cry?*

*Reform our calendar - this I urge
It separates what we should merge
Election Day is too remote
We should pay tax just `ere we vote.*

*Like hanging, as Sam Johnson said,
We'd focus on both hope and dread
As we voted in November
Just-paid taxes we'd remember.*

*No six months lapse would dissipate
The pain we felt on payment date
No April songbirds, budding trees
Would salve that wound or suffering ease.*

*A Tax Day on November first
Would regulate the voters' thirst
By entering the polling booth
With tax in mind, we'd vote the truth.*

*Memory on Election Day
Would limit wants for which we'll pay
By sharpening our civic nerve
We'd get the government we deserve.*

