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[Tom Purcell](#)

## Taxing Quotations

By [Tom Purcell](#) | April 18th, 2011 | [Comments: 4](#)

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I stumbled across something on the IRS Web site I never expected to see: quotations from great minds on taxes.

The first two agitated me:

“Taxes are what we pay for civilized society.” — Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., U.S. Supreme Court justice



Brian Fairrington / Cagle Cartoons (click to view more cartoons about taxes)

“The power of taxing people and their property is essential to the very existence of government.” — James Madison, U.S. president

Hey, fellows, I don't mind paying taxes for a civilized society. It's paying for the uncivilized part that grates on me. And I'm happy for the existence of our government, but, goodness, why does its existence have to be so big?

Here is a telling quotation from Frederick the Great, an 18th-century Prussian king:

“No government can exist without taxation. This money must necessarily be levied on the people; and the grand art consists of levying so as not to oppress.”

Yes, Freddy, levying without oppressing is a grand art — much the way it is an art for a loan shark to break five fingers without harming the wrist.

Two great thinkers offer flowery words on the subject:

“Like mothers, taxes are often misunderstood, but seldom forgotten.” — Lord Bramwell, 19th century English jurist

“To tax and to please, no more than to love and to be wise, is not given to men.” — Edmund Burke, 18th century Irish political philosopher and British statesman

Hey, Brammy, my dear sweet mother may be misunderstood and I'll never forget her, but I don't remember the government ever bringing me milk and cookies after clearing out my bank account.

And though I admire Burke, the father of conservatism, he failed to envision America in 2007. Some Americans are not only pleased with taxes, but they hope to impose more of them on the rest of us.

Three of our thinkers make fine points:

“The hardest thing in the world to understand is the income tax.” — Albert Einstein

“Taxation WITH representation ain't so hot, either.” — Gerald Barzan, humorist

“A tax loophole is something that benefits the other guy. If it benefits you, it is tax reform.” — Russell B. Long, U.S. senator

Ah, now we’re getting to the thick of it. Our tax code is the hardest thing in the world to understand. It was made that way because our representatives, seeking favor and dough, slipped in gobs of loopholes for their buddies.

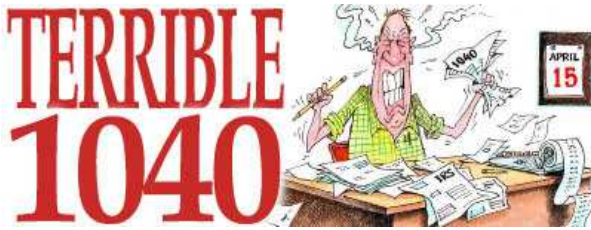
Our government calls this “tax reform,” and it is the reason our tax code now runs, according to the Cato Institute, 61,000 pages in length and takes the average American nearly 30 hours to comply with.

One quotation made me sad:

“Next to being shot at and missed, nothing is really quite as satisfying as an income tax refund.” — F.J. Raymond, humorist

Well, F.J., next to being shot at and hit, nothing is quite as unpleasant as the sizable checks I’ve had to write every year since I became self-employed in 1993.

The concept of taxes agitates me so much, particularly this week as I am buried in a pile of receipts, that I was drawn to the more humorous quotations:



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“I am proud to be paying taxes in the United States. The only thing is – I could be just as proud for half the money.” — Arthur Godfrey

“People who complain about taxes can be divided into two classes: men and women.” — Unknown

“The income tax has made more liars out of the American people than golf.” — Will Rogers

The IRS says that it does not endorse any of these quotations. I don’t fault it for being cautious. Enforcing our incomprehensible laws, rules and regulations is the hardest job in the world. The IRS is often blamed for the mess that Congress created.

Still, I’m sure the IRS wants to keep a distance from this one:

“Where there is an income tax, the just man will pay more and the unjust less on the same amount of income.” — Plato

Well, then. I guess tax woes have been around for a while.

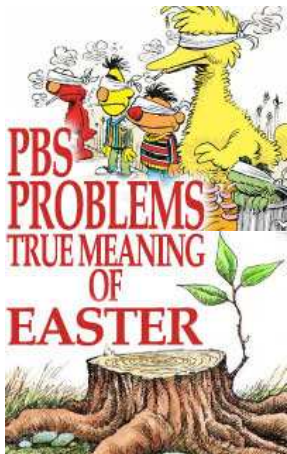
*Tom Purcell is a humor columnist nationally syndicated exclusively by Cagle Cartoons. For comments to Tom, please email him at [Purcell@caglecartoons.com](mailto:Purcell@caglecartoons.com)*

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**geotigg** 20 hours ago

Comrade Purcell,

I applaud your efforts to demonize the taxation system employed by your country's government. It is indeed difficult to understand. Your esteemed compatriot Comrade Koch has done much to expose the need for, how do you say, a level playing field?? Of course, he does not seem to want 99% of your countrymen (and women) to PLAY on that field, but I digress.

Perhaps you would be interested in moving your business operations to a country with a much more ... lienient ... tax code? May I suggest China, or Russia. I think you will agree, while those countries do not promote te same level of compassion for the 'individual freedoms' your country claims to cherish, but we got kick ass tax rates!!!

2 people liked this.

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"we live by the golden rule,he who has the gold,rules"  
Bob Dylan

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**Jim** 13 hours ago

Good column, Tom. I think there are good ideas on the left, and good ideas on the right, and bad ideas on both sides.

What gives me the warm fuzzies is whatever works best for everyone, without screwing anyone, at the lowest possible cost. I said "possible." As low as "possible." I expect we will always have to pay something, but let's keep it low as "possible."

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