

# VILLAGE VIEW

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With the federal budget still in limbo (at this writing) and the President calling upon us to let our Congressmen know what we want, I'm thinking it's time we took his advice and told Congress what we, as voters, expect from them.

No one of us can speak for everyone (which may be one reason members of Congress have a hard time reaching agreement), but if more of us consolidated our ideas, knew with certainty exactly what we'd like, and communicated our thoughts to our senators and representatives, they might do a better job.

Abraham Lincoln said, "You can't fool all the people all the time." Neither can you please all the people, all the time. At this stage, however, nobody seems able to please anybody. In asking myself what would please me, I've come up with some expectations. Yours might differ in some ways, but chances are good much of what I want is similar to your own desires.

First and foremost, of course, we need protection from attack or invasion by any other nation. That means I'm willing for some of my taxes to be spent for national defense; on the other hand, once the country has enough weaponry to rid the entire planet of all life, it seems time to stop building weapons and concentrate spending on curing internal problems.

Unemployment appears to be among the largest of those; it might be argued that defense spending will put a lot of people back to work. The hitch, there, is that defense work requires skills the rank and file don't possess; most of the unemployed have neither the education or training to fill technical jobs.

Again and again, we're told, the economy is stalled because interest rates are high. I'm beginning to question that oft-repeated statement. Interest rates peaked more than a year ago at around 20%; since then, they have dropped to around 15% without giving any appreciable impetus to borrowing on the part of business, car buyers, or home builders. At the same time that interest rates for borrowers have been high, interest rates for investors have also been high; theoretically, one should have offset the other. Furthermore, corporate interest payments are deductible from taxable profits as a business expense; for individuals, interest paid has been at least partially offset by its deductibility from taxable income.

Have we been force-fed an idea that high interest rates are at the root of the recession when there is really a different true cause? I think deficit spending is the cause, and high interest rates only a symptom.

Inflation has cooled rapidly in recent months. This is good for consumers; no pay-raise is a reward for better work when it all goes to meet rising living costs. Deflation is rough on manufacturers, though; especially those stuck

with inventories they can't sell at a profit. Buyer resistance is forcing prices down below that profit level. This situation is probably temporary, but while it prevails, businesses suffer.

The Democratic party calls for fairness; the Republican party calls for lower taxes for the wealthiest, higher defense spending, and lower outlays for social programs to restore national economic health.

I subscribe to the philosophy of both parties; taxation should be distributed fairly. Everyone should pay his fair share. Ways need to be found, though, to maintain necessary social programs so some of our people are not in want. Defense spending must be trimmed.

How? Well, consider: If everyone paid a fair share, say 10% of all income from whatever source, there would be less public resistance to paying taxes. Enough money would roll into federal coffers to operate the government and all necessary programs. To change the income tax law to a simple, straight-forward, across-the-board, no exceptions, no deductions, no ifs, and, or buts 10% assessment, would save enormous amounts. It might cause many tax lawyers and accountants to find other ways to earn incomes, but average taxpayers would be relieved of huge aggregate expenses, and the individual's tax bite would be considerably smaller. Unlike the average rank and file assembly line worker, or other average Americans, attorneys and accountants could find other income sources.

What else should be asked of government? There are those who expect government to supply all their needs: housing, food, medical care, transportation, job-training, education, even entertainment. I feel many of those programs should be gradually phased out, and that people who now look to "programs" for such services should, instead, receive direct monetary assistance to meet their basic needs and be allowed to purchase services each feels is most important to him as an individual.

Eliminated would be a huge army of service-delivery people who should be absorbed into the mainstream of productive occupations. Billions of tax dollars now go to pay salaries to so-called "helping professionals" for delivering services to the poor. The poor profit little, if at all; these "professionals" soak up in salaries the bulk of the money allocated to programs for the poor.

Direct payments to the needy (payments which would be subject to the 10% tax on income, remember,) would eliminate those high-salaried middle-men. I once deplored the idea of government supplementing incomes of the poor with direct payments, a minimum-income-level plan, but I've reversed my thinking because I recognize that a large segment of our population is unable to earn sufficient income for survival.

Further, were recipients of supplemental income participating in supporting government, they would have incentives to maintain or lower that tax. In my idealized view of distribution of this nation's wealth, no one should be constrained from earning honest income from whatever legitimate source. Everyone should be guaranteed enough money to live decently, should be able to add to that basic amount through employment, investments, however he is able; but, each should participate in paying a small, equally proportionate, share of his income to support government.

In this way, we could return to the principle: "It is the responsibility of the people to provide government, not government's responsibility to provide for the people." We could still assure no one goes hungry, homeless, or heatless.

An important element, here, is the participation of all, whether individual or business, in paying costs to run government; if each paid his fair share, each would feel personal responsibility to keep costs low. No one would feel his contribution was unfairly assessed or that others were getting free rides at his expense.

A balanced budget at all levels of government is a desirable goal. If we can't pay for things we want, we should go without until the money is available. Once we get the country on a pay-as-you-go basis, we might find we could build a reserve for emergencies like war. Financially responsible Americans plan ahead for the inevitable such as retirement, illness, and the day the old car must be replaced. Why not the government?

If this all sounds like Utopia, I'm sure that's just what it is. Stop, though, and think about it. Perhaps you'll find a germ of an idea in these ramblings, something you'll feel is worth 20c to mail a letter to your Congressman and let him know your views on these subjects.

It's high time some drastic changes were made.