

Script: College Alumni Debate, December 4, 2015

Moderator:

Good evening, Ladies and Gentlemen. It is October 14, 1892. This is the College Alumni Club. I am Judge Felix Fairshake, and I will be the moderator of tonight's debate.

In about 3 weeks, a major Presidential election will be upon us. Grover Cleveland (Democrat), Benjamin Harrison (Republican) and James Weaver (Populist) will vie for the presidency and our support of their policies.

As you may know, the Populist Party led by farmers and others around the country was recently told by their speaker Mary Lease that the farmers should "raise less corn and more hell."

In other remarks Mrs. Lease let it be surmised that she thought the Republicans and Democrats were already raising enough hell.

Tonight, for your edification and enjoyment, two distinguished gentlemen will debate one of the key platform issues of the Populists. The resolution is as follows:

Be it resolved: that the United States of America should adopt a graduated income tax, rather than tax everyone the same.

Professor Wadley Whistleblower of the ISU Political Science Department, will debate the affirmative.

Professor Pervis Polynomial, of the ISU Mathematics Department, and will debate the negative.

I call on Professor Whistleblower to present the affirmative case.

Professor Wadley Whistleblower:

Thank you, Judge Fairshake, and Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen.

My goal tonight is to present you with compelling reasons why the income tax, which is rapidly gaining acceptance, should be a graduated tax.

We learn some of the most important lessons of life on our mothers lap, and that's where I learned that "right matters." I bet you learned it too!

And it is a natural conclusion that it is morally right that those who can afford to pay more taxes should do so. A graduated income tax would serve this purpose, and is the right thing to do.

Also, I'm sure Pervis knows that some of our countries wisest economists, Including Irving Fisher, have run the numbers and determined that a graduated tax would provide more government revenue than a "one size fits all" tax.

This extra revenue would redistribute capital from the upper class to the struggling and less fortunate people in the lower class and allow all of us to enjoy more programs and services that benefit all of society, making us all happier campers.

And aren't we all in favor of happier campers?! Thank You.

Moderator:

And now, Professor Polynomial will present the negative side.

Professor Pervis Polynomial:

Thank you, Judge Fairshake. And Good evening to you, ladies and gentlemen!

Wadley here has a way with words, but I couldn't disagree with him more.

My mother taught me that "right matters" too, but a graduated income tax that goes against the constitution can't be "right."

Our Declaration of Independence states that "all men are created equal" and should have equal rights. But when one man has to pay a much larger tax than another for the same societal services, that's not equal—and is, indeed, unconstitutional.

Now Wadley claims the graduated tax would provide more revenue than a flat tax. Would that I could push a button and immediately have data to refute this, but alas, that, like the ephemeral extra revenue, is a pipe dream for the future.

But one thing you can be sure of is that under Wadley's plan, the campers will not be happy.

Higher income people won't be happy because they are the ones who have to cough up the assumed extra revenue.

Lower income people won't be happy because they will be hurt by the "reduced money" upper income people will have for innovation and investment.

Friends, there are serious problems with a graduated income tax.

Moderator:

Thank you, gentlemen. And now, would each of you give a key rebuttal statement, and end with a one sentence closing statement.

Whistleblower:

Pervis, where I come from, we went to church every Sunday, and our wise old Pastor preached the tithe, where you give according to what you can afford. And if someone gained a lot from society, he got a lot of satisfaction from giving back proportionally to that society. Surely our Declaration of Independence allows this.

I admit, our Constitution presently does not allow for a graduated income tax. But less than 30 years ago, our Constitution didn't allow for slaves to be free people. So, what did we do? We amended the Constitution! Let us now amend the Constitution for a fairer system of taxation.

And it will take more than a few extra dollars of tax to stop those who love to develop new innovations in science and industry and investing in them from doing it. In fact, if money provides incentive for new inventions, that's exactly why our Constitution presently provides for patent and copyrights.

So, I say, let's make the income tax fair, generate maximum income, and grow a healthy economy -- with a graduated income tax!

Polynomial:

Wadley, on the farm where I grew up, we knew that if a fox was in your chicken house—and was going to cost you a lot of money—you had to look for a way around it.

To find ways around a complicated graduated income tax, upper income people and their lawyers are going to devise ways to avoid taxes. And the resulting litigation will cost the country a lot of money, eating up any expected extra revenue.

As for amending our Constitution, after the Bill of Rights, the Constitution has been amended only five times. And, as Wadley's example showed, those amendments were much more significant than the one he is suggesting- to allow for a punitive graduated tax. So let's not meddle unnecessarily with our Constitution!

Ladies and Gentlemen, with all the complications in society Wadley is suggesting, he may have to create a new song... "Where have all the happy campers gone?"

So, in conclusion: A complicated graduated income tax that would treat taxpayers unequally, reduce capital for individual innovation, and encourage tax avoidance and fraud, is a bad idea, and should be avoided.

Thank You.

Moderator:

Ladies and Gentlemen, that concludes this College Alumni Club Debate.

Let's give a hand to thank Dr. Wadley Whistleblower and Dr. Pervis Polynomial for being tonight's debaters, and to Phares O'Daffer, who wrote the script.

We are not going to poll you to determine who won this debate tonight.

In fact, this debate has never been fully settled.

The Sixteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution was ratified on February 3, 1913.

It authorizes Congress to lay and collect taxes on income from whatever source derived without apportionment among the States and without regard to any census or enumeration.

This has been held to authorize a graduated tax on incomes.

On the other hand Section 3 of Article 9 of the Constitution of the State of Illinois adopted in 1970 authorizes an income tax at a non-graduated rate and the tax levied upon corporate income may not exceed that on individual income by more than a ratio of 8 to 5.

So this debate has not fully been determined.