

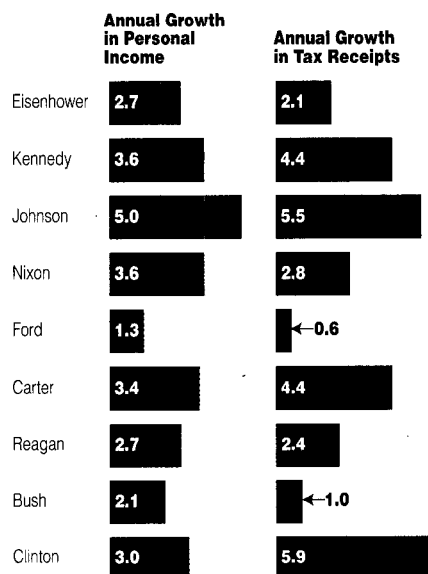
Your Presidential Vote Could Cost You

by T.J. Rodgers

If you'd like to see the U.S. economy grow while your tax bill shrinks, you should be careful when casting your vote for president. Here are three reasons to pull the lever for the Republican candidate.

Reason one: In the post-World War II era, from Eisenhower through Clinton, all Republican presidents allowed personal income to grow faster than federal tax collections, while all Democratic presidents have allowed tax collections to grow faster than personal income. That categorical statement separates every Democrat from every Republican, even big-spending Republicans like Bush and Ford.

INCOME vs. TAX GROWTH

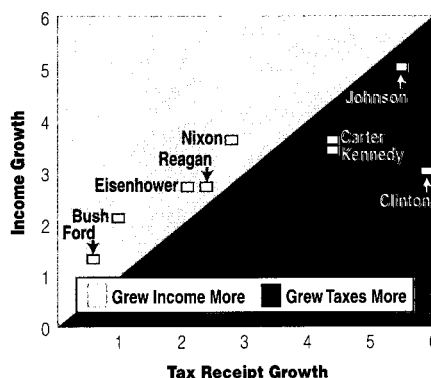


Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.

I repeat: Since 1952, *every* Democratic president has increased taxes faster than personal income, and *every* Republican president has allowed personal income to grow faster than revenues. (Clinton's 5.9 percent annual growth rate in tax receipts is

a record.) It is counterproductive to raise tax revenues faster than income, but the Democrats have not recognized it once in 42 years, nor have the Republicans once ignored it, as the following chart shows.

INCOME vs. TAX GROWTH

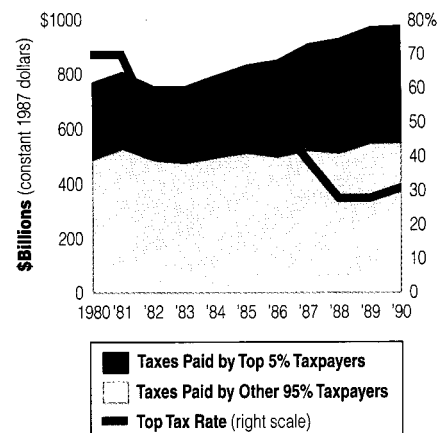


Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Reason two: Only a Republican president could convince the American people that the government should increase the taxes collected from the wealthiest 5 percent of Americans—by lowering the top tax rate. Ronald Reagan lowered the top rate from 50 percent to a post-World War II low of 28 percent. Yet while tax rates went down, tax revenues went up: From 1981 to 1988, tax receipts went up by an average \$126 billion each year. Annual tax receipts from the top 5 percent of taxpayers went up by more than that, while taxes collected from the rest actually fell.

When tax rates are low, wealthy people reinvest money more often and thus pay more taxes. When rates are high, the wealthy are skillful enough to avoid the full nominal tax burden. And so when Ronald Reagan lowered the top rate, he ended up taxing the rich more, while simultaneously reducing taxes for the remaining 95 percent of Americans—not

TOP TAX RATE vs. TAX RECEIPTS



Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Internal Revenue Service.

just as a percentage of taxes collected, but in absolute dollars.

Actual tax collections are remarkably independent of tax rates, but Democrats, with their slogans about “taxing the rich,” never seem to understand this.

Since 1952, the percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) collected in federal taxes has hardly varied from a median of about 19 percent, although top rates have fluctuated wildly from 89 percent to 28 percent. The question for politicians is simple: Do you want the 19 percent of GDP the American people will allow you to collect as federal taxes to come from a robust, lightly taxed economy or from a sluggish, heavily taxed economy? The current Congress would have cut our top rates if it had had the support of a supply-side Republican president, instead of resistance from an administration that declared Americans undertaxed.

Reason three: No post-World War II President has been able to “stimulate the economy” by increasing government spending, as Clinton believes he can. When that has been tried, the government has always grown faster than the economy.

GDP has grown an average 2.9 percent per year since 1952, while government

spending has grown more rapidly at 3.2 percent per year. If we compare growth rates of GDP with government spending, we see that not one president—Democrat or Republican—who increased government spending by more than the 2.9 percent GDP growth rate has seen the economy grow faster than the government. And every pres-

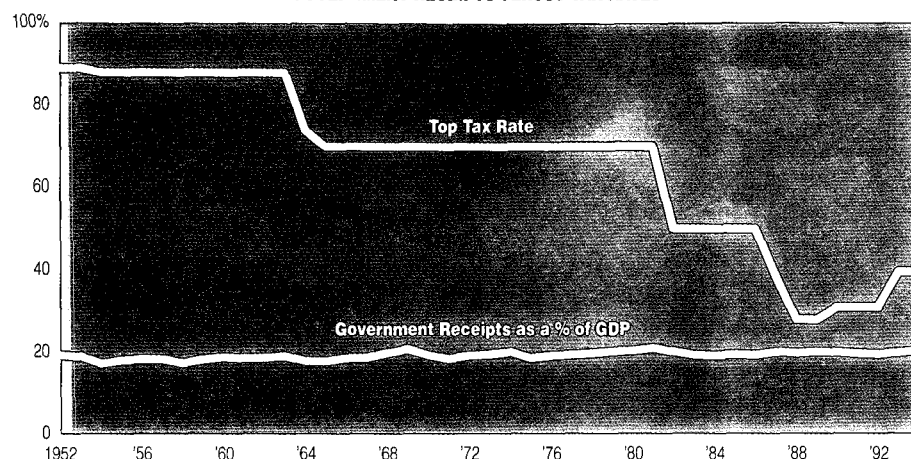
ident who curbed government spending by keeping its growth *under* 3 percent per year has permitted GDP to grow faster than the government. The 104th Congress has tried hard to cut the rate of growth of government spending, and the reduced federal spending growth Clintonites are currently crowing about has resulted. We would be

better off, however, with a president who helps Congress restrain spending, instead of one who resists restraint.

History clearly shows what's needed to make Americans better off. We should cut tax revenues so personal income rises faster. We should lower the highest income tax rate so that the highest 5 percent of taxpayers are encouraged to take capital gains and reinvest, thus paying more taxes and stimulating the economy. Someone has to convince Americans that reduced tax rates—anathema to liberal Democrats—are actually a good deal for the average American. Finally, we should slow the growth in federal spending and allow the economy to grow faster than the government. No Democratic president would or could support these three economic policies. That's why we need a Republican in the White House.

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GOVERNMENT RECEIPTS VERSUS TAX RATES



Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Internal Revenue Service.

Bird's Eye

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the very people for whose moral benefit the anthropologists established it in the first place. The complaint the underdeveloped countries advance is not that they are being Westernized, but that there is too much delay in giving them the means to Westernize themselves. It is of no use to defend the individuality of human cultures against those cultures themselves."

A sincere effort to study other cultures "from within" requires a rejection of the Western dogma of cultural relativism. Multiculturalists who wish to take non-Western cultures seriously must take seriously their rejection of relativism. Otherwise, a humble openness to other cultures becomes an arrogant dismissal of their highest claims to truth.

Schools should provide young people with an authentic multicultural curriculum that begins at home but is nevertheless open to the world beyond. Such a canon would be modestly Eurocentric, in recognition of the fact that we live in a Eurocentric world; that Europe has dominated the rest of the globe in the modern age; and that while popular culture in American is a cultural hybrid, the philosophical, political, legal, and economic institutions of this country are the product of Western civilization and no other.

Yet this new curriculum would also be cosmopolitan, seeking to criticize and enrich the West with ideas imported from abroad. An authentic multiculturalism would expose students to "the best that has been thought and said" not simply in the West

but in other cultures as well. The object is not diversity but knowledge: Students should learn ways to seek to distinguish truth from falsehood, beauty from vulgarity, right from wrong. Knowledge is both a matter of ascertaining facts, as well as developing the tools to formulate "right opinion." To use Plato's famous image, we live our lives in a cave, where much of the light of truth has been deflected into the shadow of perspective and opinion. But a sound multicultural education should aspire to help us move from opinion to knowledge, to climb out of the darkness into the illuminating light of the sun.



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Flashback

TO KNOW NOTHING OF WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE YOU WERE BORN
IS TO REMAIN EVER A CHILD—*Cicero*

The Old College—Why?

One of the most annoying lines in contemporary pop music is from Rod Stewart's "Maggie May," in which the wizened Scot sings, "It's late September and I really should be back at school."

To those who loathe college life, Stewart's sentence, with its casual and arrogant assumption of privilege, conjures images of shaggy-haired rich kids tossing Frisbees on the quad as marijuana smoke wafts through an air that is thick with hostility toward the outlying "townies."

For the vast majority of Americans, the superior lyric would be, "It's late September and I really should be playing football/harvesting pumpkins/reading Hawthorne." There are a handful of supple fellows who can live in both worlds—Vernon Parrington, our greatest literary historian, taught English *and* coached football at the University of Oklahoma, but Parrington only proves that the better the Sooner.

It may be unthinkable now—like a day without television—but in years long gone, America's youth had attractive alternatives to the college track. Though we've not had a college-less president since Harry Truman and are unlikely ever to have such again, the oldest callings—parenthood, farming, carpentry, storytelling—still require no parchment, at least not yet. To take one example, many of the most distinctive and iconoclastic American writers of our century fall into two categories: those who hated college, and those who never bothered to go.

The latter group is vast and various: it ranges from H.L. Mencken to Ernest Hemingway to Gore Vidal to Ray Bradbury to William Saroyan. They were joyful participants in what Vidal calls "the worst perversion of all, autodidacticism."

American writers used to be able to serve their apprenticeships on newspapers,

rather than in Masters of Fine Arts programs in soulless multiversities. "If you would learn to write," instructed Ralph Waldo Emerson, "'tis in the street you must learn it.... The people, and not the college, is the writer's home."

The irrepressible Henry L. Mencken recalled, "At a time when the respectable bourgeois youngsters of my generation were college freshmen, oppressed by simian sophomores and affronted with balderdash daily and hourly by chalky pedagogues, I was at large in a wicked seaport of half a million people, with a front seat at every public show...and getting earfuls and eye-fuls of instruction in a hundred giddy arcana, none of them taught in schools."

Mencken as grad student is no more plausible than Bill Clinton as Benedictine. Thomas Wolfe (the first one) found graduate students an "intellectual peasantry—dull, cold, suspicious of any idea they had not been told to approve," and it was the genius of Mencken (and most autodidacts) to think outside the prescribed boundaries. (Rarely will you meet a thoughtful non-college-educated person whose political views conform to the contours of the "liberal" or "conservative" procrustean beds.)

Who would say that Mencken's education, in his and his family's Baltimore, was inferior to the one he'd have received if his old man had shipped him off to Princeton? Could he have majored in "Baltimore" at Princeton? More to the point, can one major in "Baltimore" at Johns Hopkins?

A recent critic of institutional schooling, the Kentucky poet-farmer Wendell Berry, charged that "the child is not educated to return home and be of use to the place and community; he or she is educated to *leave* home and earn money in a provisional future that has nothing to do with place or community."

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And so Jennifer College ends up on K Street in Washington. Or Wall Street. Or anywhere beyond Baltimore or Kentucky.

Golden ages turn sere; that was then, and this is now. An H.L. Mencken of 1996, whose only credential was a coruscant prose style, could pound the pavement from dawn to dusk, 365 days a year, and after all that leather his resumes would sit in Gannett and Knight-Ridder wastebaskets from Miami to Puget Sound. "Frankly, Henry," the gatekeeper of the newspaper chain would tell him, "you're not a bad writer—I could see you eventually working your way up to our Style section—but in all candor, corporate policy prohibits me from hiring you without that degree. I can recommend a few good journalism schools...."

So, undergraduates, September has arrived, and everyone says you really should be back at school. You might give a thought to Henry Adams, who looked back on his Harvard days none too wistfully: "The chief wonder of education is that it does not ruin everybody connected in it, teachers and taught." If you have a subversive soul, then read books that aren't on any reading lists, and give special study to your own Baltimore, wherever that may be.

—Bill Kauffman