

How To Start a Tax Revolt

You just have to know the right words

by Bryson Reinhardt

SMALL TOWNS are nice places. I like them because they seem to have more individualists.

Early in 1959, in the small towns of the state of Washington a spontaneous tax-protest movement, almost awesome in its vitality, suddenly mushroomed, and even spread to the cities. Within about 30 days, somewhere near 150,000 people let the legislators in Olympia know where they stood on tax questions.

The movement had no name, no leaders, no organization, no headquarters, no employees, and almost no funds! Yet the legislators received the most forceful "word from home" in all the years since Washington became a state!

My personal interest in this "Tax Revolt" (as it was dubbed by the Spokane *Spokesman-Review*) is that it followed a talk I made on the evening of February 10, 1959, before about 100 members and guests of the Lions Club in Ritzville, Washington. In that talk, I outlined three principles which I

felt would add new vitality to tax-protest movements. I did not originate these principles—I just reported them.

Naturally, I was electrified by the results that followed. Some people have suggested that the outrageous looting proposals advanced by the governor and the legislature created the *vitality* of the Tax Revolt. Others give credit to the working principles outlined in my talk. There is considerable evidence to support the latter view, considering the apathetic submission of the people of Washington to past looting—equally outrageous!

My hope in writing this account is that these principles may inject new vitality into Tax Revolt movements everywhere. The principles are: 1. Rejection of false and fraudulent labels; 2. Action of individual people; 3. Withdrawal of your voluntary sanction.

Perhaps the easiest way to explain these principles and their application is to try to reconstruct the way I explained them to the group at

Ritzville—and the action that followed.

I had just finished my work (I'm in the advertising business) of about ten days in the friendly little town of Ritzville, Washington (population about 2500), when Phil Langford, Branch Manager of the Old National Bank, "put the bite" on me to speak at the Ritzville Lions Club.

"Any restrictions, Phil, on what I talk about?" I inquired.

"Uh . . . what do you have in mind?" he asked cautiously.

"Taxes," I muttered . . .

The interest in his eyes was quick and genuine. "Hop to it! . . . and that's one program I wouldn't miss—even if I weren't program chairman!"

I wondered if 20 people would show up at the meeting. Little did I know the Ritzville Lions Club!

I began . . . "I'd like to tell you a little bit about the words that are today being used by the bureaucrats to control and enslave you . . ."

"First of all, I'd like to suggest to you why we should pay closer attention to the words we use—especially in matters concerning politics and economics.

"Our trust of labels is so complete that it is almost as involuntary as the beating of our hearts. This is because we are *conditioned* hundreds of times every week . . . conditioned by everyday experiences in our environment *to trust labels*.

"For instance, you have never opened a package labeled 'cigarettes' and found anything but cigarettes in it. You have never driven down a street labeled 'Main Street' that wasn't really Main Street. You have never opened a door labeled 'room 428' that wasn't room 428. You have never driven up to a gas pump labeled 'Texaco' to find that you had purchased water. You have never stepped into something labeled 'elevator' that wasn't.

"When you first grasp the idea of *how completely you trust labels*, you have taken your first step toward emancipation from political tyranny. For you are held in bondage to your political masters largely through the shackles of labels. Let's look at a few examples to see how true this is.

CONSIDER THE LABEL 'government money,' 'state funds' or 'federal funds.' All of us use such labels a lot . . . directly or by implication. We say 'let's get the state to build this road . . . let's get the government to build this dam . . . let's try to get some federal funds to help with improvements on the airport.' Even at the very moment you are protesting in righteous indignation the ever-mounting federal and state debts and taxes, you are secretly scheming how you can get some of that 'federal money' to help improve your municipal airport.

"Why do we do it? . . . *because of our complete and involuntary*

trust of labels! When we use the label 'federal funds' our trust of labels is so complete that we create the illusion *even in our own thinking* that such things as 'federal funds' *exist!* That there is a source of wealth waiting to be tapped!

TO ILLUSTRATE the power of accurate, honest labels, let's rephrase some of those examples in more accurate language. Take the case of that road we want built;—'Let's get the State of Washington to force the people of Washington to pay for the construction of that new road.' Sounds different, doesn't it?

"Now, try this one: 'Let's get the federal government to force the people of the United States to pay for the construction of that new dam.' Or how about this one?—'Let's see if we can get the federal tax-looters to loot all the rest of our neighbors in the United States to help pay for improvements to our local airport (that we ought to pay for ourselves).'

"The point of these illustrations is this: our trust of labels is so complete that when we use such labels as 'government money' or 'federal funds' we create the illusion that such funds exist. This illusion blinds us to the reality that government cannot give anybody a nickel *until after it has taken that nickel away from somebody.* We forget that when we ask *any* governmental unit to do *anything* for us, we are really asking that government

unit to *force* us—and our neighbors—to do the job.

"Now, let's take another label: 'federal aid to education.' Whenever I hear this phrase used, I immediately correct the user as courteously as possible. I say, 'Pardon me, Sir, there is no such thing as federal aid to education. You must be thinking of federal control of education.' When he protests in an injured tone, 'Oh, no I want federal aid without federal control,' I patiently explain, 'Sir, it is as absurd to speak of federal aid as it would be for your physician to offer to give you a blood transfusion by taking a pint of blood out of your left arm; spilling about 91 per cent of it on the floor; and then putting the pitiful remainder into your right arm.'

"All money for the support of our schools comes from the people . . . there just isn't any other source. *Friends* of the public schools want city, county, and state tax-collectors to take the money from the people and give it to our schools. *Enemies* of the public schools want federal tax collectors to take the money from the people, dilute it by about ten to one, and then ship back the pitiful remainder in a package fraudulently labeled "aid", for which we are supposed to be grateful and to grovel at the feet of the bureaucrats. Since there cannot be any such thing as federal aid to education, *because it doesn't exist*, will you kindly ex-

plain why you are in favor of federal control of education, which you were just now advocating?"

MY GOOD FRIENDS of Ritzville, the only way the bureaucrats can force federal control of education on you is if *you* permit *them* to *label* this hideous, slimy thing 'federal aid to education.' I suggest that, as your first line of defense against this monstrous evil, that you never permit this fraudulent label to pass unchallenged in your presence. Correct it, then and there, whether in private conversation or in a public meeting! Remember that the bureaucrats don't have the slightest interest in whether you oppose or support them, just as long as you use their labels.

"Now, let's go on to another label. Let's consider Mr. Rosellini's recent pretext for taking from the people of the State of Washington an *extra* \$117,000,000 during the next biennium. I think he offered as his excuse that 'the people demand additional services.'

"There's an interesting label. 'The people demand additional services.' What people? When did they demand these alleged services? What was the form and nature of that demand? By what *right* did they *demand*?"

"Was one of these 'people' a fat, incompetent slob who sits on his rocking chair and collects 44 looted dollars every week *as his reward for not producing*? Was one of these

'people' the sly bureaucrat in the Ill-fare Department (they insist on calling it the Welfare Department) who 'took' the people of Washington State for \$25,500,000 more than the legislature authorized? By what authority did he take these additional funds? On what moral premise does he now 'demand additional services'?"

"If Mr. Rosellini were now in this room, I would consider it a privilege to ask him one question and that question would be: 'Mr. Rosellini, do you consider yourself the *servant* of the people of Washington or the *master* of the people of Washington?'"

"After he replied that he considered himself the servant, and I'm sure he would so reply, I would suggest to him, 'If you really consider yourself the servant, just go down and sit in your office in Olympia—and *we'll tell you when we want something done!*'"

"What are these 'services' that the 'people' are 'demanding'? Here is an example of one of these alleged 'services' . . . I have here an analysis of HB 450, this analysis prepared by Seattle attorney J. Paul Coie. The bill is 53 pages in length.

According to Mr. Coie, this bill proposes to set up a series of marketing orders which will cover every kind of agricultural product produced or processed in the State of Washington. It proposes to fix the amount which can be produced, the time when it can be produced, the

number and the names of those who will be permitted to produce, and to assess producers, handlers and distributors in order to develop a stabilization fund to subsidize the marginal producer.

"This will mean that you, as an individual farmer (whether you are growing wheat, chickens, vegetables, fruit) or you, as a handler or distributor, will be regulated as to what commodity you can grow, what commodity you can handle, when you can do it, and you will be assessed a subsidy in order to maintain the so-called equitable distribution for the treatment of surpluses (a nice phrase for subsidizing the marginal producer). Are you farmers in the audience *demanding* this 'service'?"

"May I again remind you that it would be impossible for the office holders to defraud us and to enslave us if we did not permit them to use false and fraudulent labels, such as referring to this monstrosity as a 'service'.

"One more label: we permit them to call a thing 'public electric power' and so blind ourselves to the reality that it is not public in any sense of the word. When the office holders attempt to generate and distribute electric energy, they use this most vital resource in the most outrageously *discriminatory* manner as a political whip of the most awesome potency to control industry, to control jobs, to control *people*.

"Nor is it electric power (the in-

credible incompetence of Tennessee Valley Authority, Bonneville Power Administration, and other political electric power bureaus is always a dependable guarantee of chronic power shortage in the very regions of some of the greatest natural power resources in the world). If we were accurate of speech, we would refer to this concentration of incompetence and corruption as 'political electric power shortage and favoritism.'

"Perhaps you'll agree that it sounds like an entirely different thing when it is labeled honestly and accurately. Of course it isn't actually a different thing . . . the honest, accurate label just describes what it *is*, not the illusion the bureaucrats want to create in your mind, *which you help them to create every time you submit and grant your sanction to the use of false labels*.

"Now I would like to tell you of the incredible cost of political enterprise. One of the best examples that I know of came out of Franklin County, Idaho. In 1934, two flash floods cleaned out trees, brush and sod from the banks of Bear Creek and created quite a serious soil-erosion problem in the area.

THE PEOPLE of Franklin County trusted the false label 'federal aid' and appealed for help to the bureaucrats who call themselves the Soil Conservation Service. These looters willingly obliged, and forced

the people of the United States to pay \$30,000 for something they called a 'preliminary survey.' They estimated a half million dollars to repair the damage on this tiny creek.

"Keep in mind the fact that the established pattern of bureaucracy is to propose an expenditure far lower than they intend to spend. I have in mind an article in which the author pointed out that the Army Corps of Engineers have yet to complete their first project for as little as *four times* the amount of their original estimate. Keeping this in mind, it is completely fair to say that they were really proposing to force the people of the United States to pay \$2,000,000 for boondoggling on this little creek, plus the \$30,000 already spent.

"What the bureaucrats had not reckoned with is that the population of Franklin County, Idaho, is heavily Mormon. The outrageous extravagance of this estimate was too much for their thrift, and the proposal to loot the people of the United States was too much for their strong moral fiber. So they decided to do the job themselves. They formed a *voluntary* committee, took up a *voluntary* collection, recruited a goodly amount of *voluntary* help. They rented giant earth-moving machinery and did the job themselves at a total cost of \$39,745. Which meant that the *voluntary* effort of people acting *as individuals* in their own self-interest

produced the finished result at about one-fiftieth the cost of political enterprise.

"I think it safe to say that the people of Franklin County, Idaho, would have never called upon the bureaucrats in the first place if it had not been for the illusion created in their own thinking by that false and fraudulent label 'federal aid'. Always keep in mind this basic reality: *federal aid simply does not exist*. Never permit to pass unchallenged the words which create the illusion that there is such a thing.

I PROMISED your chairman to mention a few words about the difference between a tax-looter and an armed robber. Some of you have told me, 'well, the armed robber uses a gun.' If you are under the illusion that the tax-looter does not use a gun, I suggest that you get firsthand proof. Just try refusing to pay your taxes. If you refuse long enough—and resist fully—you will discover for yourself that he has a gun and will use it.

"There is a slight difference in *When* the armed robber and the tax-looter show you their guns. This is not important—but it is most important that you understand that *a significant difference does exist!* The armed robber does not ask you or me to sanction his act of robbing us. The tax looter *does*.

"This is more important than you can imagine. To the tax-

looter, the most important thing in the world is that *you help him fake reality . . . without your voluntary help he cannot pretend* that his action is *different* from that of the armed robber. Above everything else, the tax-looter dreads the day when you *as an individual person* will withhold your voluntary sanction of his looting, when you will refuse to help him pretend any longer!

"I can *promise* you that the tax-looter dreads this act *by one individual person* more than he dreads the combined pressure of all the organized pressure groups that he will ever have to face. And I remind you that your sanction is a voluntary act. Not all the clubs, guns and whips in the world can force one *voluntary* act from you. They can force you to act—but they *cannot* force your voluntary sanction!

"So if you wish to be effective in your opposition to the looters, who first demand part of what you produce, then all you produce, and (as Soapy Williams is now doing in Michigan) then demand *more* than you produce—If you wish to oppose these moral cannibals who ask to eat you alive after they have forced you to do the cooking, just remember three basic rules: 1. Never permit, unchallenged, the use of false and fraudulent labels, which create an illusion for which there is no counterpart in reality. 2. Act as individual people—do not organize

into a formal group! 3. Never grant the tax-looter your voluntary sanction!"

SEVEN DAYS after making this speech in Ritzville (as closely as I can now remember) I received an inspiring telephone call from Ed Cross, an attorney in Ritzville. He told how an informal, unorganized group of *individuals* had drafted and had printed a petition, reading as follows:

A Renewed Declaration of Independence

We, the undersigned citizens, knowing that the power to tax is the power to destroy, and believing that man is best governed who is least governed, and that government should be held to the same financial responsibility as that to which we are held—namely: to live within its means—do hereby pledge that we shall not require more services of our government than such as are already being rendered.

We therefore demand that no increased taxes be enacted and that Government, both State and Federal, confine their expenditures to existing sources and limits of revenue.

We further declare that any elected representative of the people who does not subscribe to these views is not worthy of our support at the polls.

Coupled with this petition were form letters which had been printed

for each individual person who wished to send them to his elected representatives. These letters said:

I have signed a petition addressed to the Governor, our Representatives in the National Congress, and our State Representatives, in which I have pledged that I will not request any increased governmental services and demanding that no increased taxes of any kind be levied.

You will shortly receive this petition, which it is expected will have the signatures of at least 1500 citizens of Adams County, Washington, most of whom will write you a similar letter.

This position is indorsed by leaders and members of both political parties.

I urge that you exert every effort to prevent any additional taxation whatever.

Overnight these petitions and letters swept across the entire county like a prairie fire. Pent up emotions of long suffering victims of the tax-looters exploded in a violent burst of spontaneous activity. The movement jumped across county lines and spread over the whole state. Ed Cross, Ralph Danekas, and other *individual people* in this informal Ritzville organization worked far into the night answering inquiries and suggesting ideas for tax-ridden people in other states.

The Legislature shuddered under the impact of the greatest tax-revolt in the history of the state. Two-thirds of both houses were of

the same political party as the governor, and they were strongly committed to legislative action opening the way to a state income tax. The measure lost by seven votes!

Of course, staggering additional looting took place in spite of the Tax Revolt. But the new tax-club, as originally designed, was pared down before the people were clouted with it.

IN MY TRAVELS around the state since the legislature ended its special session, I have been struck by the quiet anger of hundreds of people. The office holders are, as usual, counting on indifference and short memories of their constituents. I don't think they realize what an effective memory-course they have supplied by their open contempt of the wishes of the folks "back home". Time will tell.

The real significance of the Tax Revolt in Washington was not what it accomplished, but rather, what it *demonstrated*. It gave an electrifying demonstration that a small handful of people, acting as individuals who refuse to grant their sanction to looting and false labels, have struck with an impact never before experienced in this state. If the movement had got underway a month earlier, no telling how much looting it might have prevented!

The principles which gave the movement its tremendous vitality are *not* copyrighted . . . *help yourself!*

THE RAISING OF A TOWN

**The simply told tale of how citizens can
act to save themselves**

by Jeannette and Horace Mitchell

IT IS A WONDROUS and a fearsome thing to see a town rise—the jolly, the sedate, the scholarly, the athletic, the pious and the impious—the town in all its personalities—pleasantly (but cold-eyedly) unite in action under the law. And it is completely humbling for an individual to know that he was to some extent the cause of that arising.

We publish the weekly paper, *The Kittery Press*, in the town of Kittery on the tip of Maine's long chin. The population is cosmopolitan: old and new families, Navy and Air Force, the majority intensely alert to new things that are beneficial to the town.

The dailies of Portland, Maine and Portsmouth, New Hampshire, (across the river) have large circulations in Kittery. Both outspokenly favor the town manager system of municipal government. National magazines publish many articles of the same slant. Obviously, Kittery people would consider the manager form worthy of study.

They studied it. Each with his own point of view, his own background, and his comprehension of Kittery's present government.

A dozen or so organized as the Better Government Association. They were mostly in the 25 to 35 year-old age group. Although they perhaps did not know it, they were just another manifestation of the desire to reform government which always burgeons after a war. As individuals some had held minor town offices. Some had tried but had not been elected. Soon after their officers were chosen it was discovered that the secretary was not a registered voter.

The Association obtained quantities of booklets and folders issued by the national organization promoting the manager form. Meetings were held and speakers expert on the subject were heard. Question periods were allowed. A favorable impression was made on a great number of us. Others were turned against the idea by the fact that