Defense Report
AUSA

The World Peace Tax Fund—An Invitation to Fiscal Anarchy

Lots of silly ideas never go away, even after their impracticability becomes known. They just sink below the surface for a while until their advocates are able to muster the gall to bring them up again. Such is the case of the "World Peace Tax Fund," a proposal to permit U.S. taxpayers who are not happy with the idea of having some of their tax money go the national defense to designate the peace fund as the proper recipient. When the idea was first surfaced by Sen. Mark Hatfield of Oregon and Rep. Ronald Dellums of California back in 1977 it was laughed off Capitol Hill. But now, with the omens for unveiling ridiculous legislation apparently in the proper coincidence with the moon and the state of the tide, Rep. Dellums has surfaced it again.

One can let his imagination run wild as he conjures up the logical impact of such a piece of legislation in the very unlikely event that Congress should pass it and the President should sign it into law. Every member of Congress who has a special peeve against some part of the federal budget could introduce a companion bill. We might have money diverted from the Department of Health and Welfare for a "World Planned-Parenthood Fund" or from the Agriculture Department for "The Fund to Discourage the Growing of Tobacco." The list could be endless. The precedent set by the World Peace Tax Fund would be an invitation to fiscal anarchy.

Since 1977, Sen. Hatfield has assumed the heavy responsibility of being chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee and has apparently learned how foolish this idea is. At least he has not yet sponsored a Senate version of the Dellums bill. What we hope he has learned in the intervening years is that the strongest drive toward peace is the deterrence of war by being ready to fight. The converse is also true. If we strip ourselves of a believable deterrence we invite challenges to our best interests and, ultimately, force the risk of going to war at a disadvantage.

The Dellums bill will probably never see the light of a committee hearing, much less serious discussion on the floor of the House, but the mere fact of its existence must be acknowledged; indeed, it must be marked for what it is—an exercise in misguided idealism.

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