

Recently there was a letter in the publication of the National Fraternal Society of the Deaf in which the writer stated his opposition to an extra income tax exemption for the deaf. In it he wrote that he wished proponents of the extra tax exemption would wake up to the ill effects of such an exemption.

I wish such opponents as the writer would wake up and study this question from all angles instead of clamping their hands over their eyes, refusing to "listen" to the matter any further. It makes sense to ask for such an extra tax exemption. It has sound footing as to the need. It is legal to ask for such a boost to purchasing power. It is no disgrace to ask for this help for those who need it. There are some of us who are earning an adequate income and do not need the extra exemption, I will agree this much. What I do not concur on is the haste in dumping the idea in the garbage can without giving the question all the consideration that it deserves.

In that letter it was claimed employers would hesitate to hire the deaf workers on the basis they were granted an extra tax exemption. I have filled out applications for employment and my understanding was that my being hired depended on my qualifications as an employee, nowhere was tax mentioned. I believe employers would not give a second thought to that extra exemption--unless such an exemption should also benefit them. So here is something to consider. The deaf have difficulties in finding work. Could that extra exemption law be written to encourage more employers to hire the deaf workers? Let us not be too hasty in saying No. Maybe this is feasible.

It was written in the same letter that fellow workers would be disgusted with the idea that the deaf co-worker is getting an extra tax exemption, and that the displeasure would be vented in a form of revenge by shoving unpleasant work upon the deaf worker. Such situations exist today and we are not getting any extra tax exemption either. There are two types of people, one type that likes the deaf and the other type that dislikes the deaf. There is no in-between type of people where the deaf are concerned. The extra tax exemption would not make matters worse. Not long ago I started out on a survey as to the public's attitude on this extra exemption. My goal was to have 50 replies and I managed to get 11 before my enthusiasm fizzled. Not one of the 11 replies indicated that the exemption would be granting a special privilege to the deaf. My evaluation was that such an exemption for the deaf would be accepted by the general public, and that the general public would take it for themselves if they could get it.

The opponents to this extra tax exemption failed to realize there are others who need it badly. There are deaf in the low income field who should have this boost to their purchasing power. Let us consider the \$4,000 income as the maximum where the extra tax exemption would apply. With the loss of hearing due to certain diseases, there have been cases of brain damage that prevent full reception of education. Those deaf will never pull themselves up by their bootstraps, regardless of amount of training, simply because they are xxx

\$600 TAX EXEMPTION--?

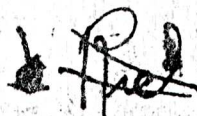
trapped in their situations by their deafness and inadequate intelligence. The opponents thus far have been the upper crust deaf whose vanity has led them to write reams of paper decrying such an idea. They have no idea of what they have done. They have hemmed the ones who need the exemption further in the cage of helplessness. Let us wake up and be our brothers' keepers! Those who need it cannot write as well as those blinded by their vain pride into denying the want or the need for the extra exemption.

How about those who have other handicaps with their deafness? Medicine has progressed to the point where more babies are being saved. Such babies, if deaf, may also have other handicaps. In the Montana School for the Deaf the ratio has been 1 deaf and spastic child to 5 healthy deaf children in the last 6 years. This is 20 per cent and for every 100 "normal deaf" children this comes to 20 deaf and spastic children. These spastic children have limited muscular control and positively inadequate strength later as adults to earn their living in a trade requiring physical labor. Desk jobs are not within their capabilities because they cannot use the phone. Also their manual dexterity is not that of the average deaf.

Those deaf and spastic children as adults will be having higher expenses than the average deaf wage earners today. They will be unable to drive to work and will be depending on taxis or other drivers. Their medical bills will be heavier than those of the average deaf, as a spastic does not have the same median of good health as an average person. Must they be a drain on this country's economy due to their low incomes and being in the regular taxation bracket?

The extra \$600 exemption granted to the blind was not based on sympathy nor given as a gift. The extra expenses encountered by the blind due to their handicap indicated the need for such a grant. Do not the deaf have extra expenses? If we wanted an item, we have to hunt for it in our cars, losing time and consuming gasoline which is priced higher than a phone call. Think of all the bargains we, the deaf, have failed to gain. Think of the dollars we could have saved by going to auctions. Think of the trial and error way we have to live due to our deafness. Do not we have a higher cost of living? The trouble with the upper crust deaf is they look at this a tax exemption idea from the wrong angle. For those of us who have adequate income, we manage--but those of us with insufficient income are not making much headway.

I repeat--there are merits in this extra tax exemption idea and it should be supported by all of us, for those of us who need it.



Richard Mullins