

## Taxes that are levied to discourage

Since taxation is a powerful agent of destruction, equally discouraging to what is good and to what is evil, when it is desired to destroy anything it is easy to tax it out of existence. This fact is illustrated by the "jitney-bus" development in San Francisco many years ago. Automobiles were beginning to be more plentiful. Many people owning them saw opportunity to earn a few dollars with their cars by operating them in the streets as "jitney buses." ("Jitney" was the current slang term for a five-cent piece.) This practice filled the major streets with cars picking up and unloading passengers and made great inroads on the street railway company. The whole thing, although in many cases

a convenience to the people, was easily "cured." A substantial license fee, which is a form of tax, was required of anyone wishing to operate a jitney bus, and the number was soon reduced to about a hundred. That "the power to tax is the power to destroy" was here made sharply evident.

Tobacco is heavily taxed, liquor is taxed out of all proportion to its initial cost, dogs are taxed—all as repressive measures. So it is evident that the people's representatives can punitively repress any activity they choose by taxing (fining) it.

There has been frequent expression of the opinion that taxes should not be used as sociological tools, that there should be no attempt to correct offensive conditions by taxation. Persons expressing this opinion do not seem to realize that the alteration of sociological affairs is inextricably bound with taxation and that a tax, as a fine, powerfully alters sociological conditions, whether it is intended or not, and that unwise taxation, instead of not affecting, can and does *create* offensive conditions.

How obviously more intelligent it would be, therefore, to refrain from fining the activities that are beneficial.