

AN ALTERNATIVE OUTLOOK

By Everett W. Gross

My last article was critical of the reason which is most commonly handed to you to make you think you are getting some good out of our space exploration programs. That reason is the one which says you should be worrying about the Earth getting too full of people. That is just one of the many samples of the mythology that forms the basis of too much of our public policy.

Another sample is that one which asks you to worry about the underground economy. An article which I found treats the topic rather at length in the usual fashion.

The prospects of shaking ourselves loose from such mythology are not too good in the short term. But the chance of solving the pressing economic problems of our day is absolutely zero until we do shake loose from it.

Admittedly, some of the aspects of the underground economy really should be causes for concern. In particular, the article mentions loan sharks, counterfeiters, prostitutes, pornographers, and traffickers in illegal aliens. The principal concern even in these cases, however, seems to be not with the existence of those occupations, but merely with the loss in tax revenue.

The article places in the same class such occupations as home repair and remodeling, direct sales of food producers, child care, domestic services, auto repair, lawn maintenance, private lessons, sewing and catering services. And the only concern seems to be about the non-payment of income taxes.

The author of the article argues that if those people do not pay income taxes, then you, the above-board person, has to make up the difference. That author is suffering from an error that is all too common. He assumes that if those people paid taxes on their incomes, their occupation would continue to exist. For the most part, he is flat out wrong (repeat, wrong.)

The fact is, that the existence of that underground economy is the principal reason why your occupation is able to exist and pay any taxes at all.

The very fact of the income tax is so wrong and so damaging and so destructive to the whole economy that if it were strictly enforced, and strictly obeyed, our entire country and its economy would totally collapse within one year.

I am not condoning the fact that our underground economy includes that first list (pornography, counterfeiting, etc.) but those are only examples of what people are driven to, when the rest of the economy is in such a crippled state.