

Don't cut the budget, we need a progressive tax

Gov. Jon Corzine has cut higher education, and a great many other worthy programs, in the name of "balancing the budget."

Gov.-elect Chris Christie is preparing to do even more of the same. He is even talking of a so-called "fiscal emergency."

We should recognize that this is all a swindle.

The New Jersey budget, like that of New York, California and all other states, can easily be balanced through a progressive income tax. That is what should be done.

Among those people who have some understanding of what is going on, who is opposed to doing this? Two groups: businesses, and wealthy individuals. These two groups are often interrelated.

Wealthy individuals do not have to make use of the publicly funded facilities like public schools and colleges, and social welfare programs, that have been cut back. Businesses don't use them at all, in any direct way.

The owners of the mass media are, of course, in both categories: wealthy individuals, and very large businesses. It is not surprising that they echo the view: "Taxes are bad! Don't raise taxes, cut the budget!"

Point Of View

By Grover Furr

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Of course they say this! That's because they do reflect the interests of the wealthy, not that of the vast majority of the population.

So-called "conservative" and "libertarian" political groups are really propagandists for these two groups, a fact they do their best to hide, of course.

As for the rest of us: we ought to be demanding a much more steeply progressive income tax, and an increase in taxes so as to balance the budget, while maintaining and, in fact, increasing expenditures for programs that benefit the majority of the population.

Propagandists for business interests will cry, "But you will drive business out of the state!" Nonsense. It is flatly not true.

But if it were true, then what? Don't tax businesses at all? In that case, a sharply progressive income

tax on individuals would be even more necessary.

It is clear that a progressive income tax, and sharply higher taxes, are needed to fund social programs that serve the vast majority of our citizens. This is the case in all social-welfare industrial Canada, Western Europe, Australia.

Higher taxes, meaning, sharply progressive income taxes, mean more freedom, not less, for the majority of the population. That's what we need.

Of course, to get this result we would have to have representatives who are responsive to the needs of those who elect them. We would have to have a democracy.

And we don't have one. The United States is not a democratic country. We live in a plutocracy, with a democratic facade. We live in a country whose elected representatives are responsive to the very rich.

It's fashionable in some quarters to criticize Marxism. This is because Marx and his followers got it right. Capitalism is a "dictatorship of the capitalists." It isn't, and cannot be, a democracy.

Meanwhile, there are still the examples of Canada, Western

Europe, Australia and New Zealand, all the other major industrial societies.

There, high and progressive income taxes fund programs that, while far from what is really needed, look like paradise in comparison to what we Americans have.

Let's demand a progressive income tax in New Jersey.

What's the alternative? We are living it! State employees are being "taxed" by heavy pay cuts in the form of furlough days, pay increase déferments.

Our students are being "taxed" by the cutbacks in higher education.

All working New Jerseyans are being "taxed" by the cuts in essential public services, which we have all paid for through our taxes in the past.

The union movement, progressive political groups, and all of us concerned for the welfare of the working people, should demand an increase in the income tax to stop any cuts in state services; to expand those services; and to pay for them.

Anything less is a swindle.

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