

Moral Amnesia or Moral Blindness?: The America We Never Had

A friend recently sent me a web link to a July 31, 1952 issue of THE SATURDAY EVENING POST, in which there appeared an article by Mario Pei, titled "The America We Lost." Pei (1901-1978) was a professor of languages, who according to wikipedia supported "individualism, constitutional literalism, and other paleoconservative principles."

In his book, THE AMERICA WE LOST: The Concerns Of A Conservative (New York: The World Publishing Company and New American Library, 1968, pages 112 and 116), Pei wrote that "the income tax is contrary to the spirit of the original Constitution." Unlike many patriots today, he did not challenge the 16th Amendment on the basis that it was inconsistent with Supreme Court decisions, such as the 1916 Brushaber case, which held that the 16th Amendment did not grant Congress any "new" taxing power.

To those who would repeal the federal income tax, but still allow the states to tax personal income, he queried: "From the standpoint of constitutional and philosophical principle, does it make any difference whether the power to destroy [i] the individual be wielded by a federal or a state government? Or, for that matter, even by a local government? Are state bureaucrats more sacrosanct, or considerate, than federal ones?" Unfortunately, he continued to embrace imposts, duties, and excises, as acceptable sources of government revenue.

In his brief discussion of Ruth Nanda Anshen's concept of moral amnesia, Pei refers to it (page 151) as "the loss of individual moral sense, ... forgetfulness of one's obligations, and of the moral code that has guided us in the past." Unfortunately, Pei (and those who adopted the Constitution of 1789) not only forgot that the Declaration of Independence protested having taxes imposed "on us without our Consent," but also failed to recognize that our "unalienable Rights" to "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness," are inevitably violated by taxes of any kind.

Whether the cause of this obtuseness was blindness due to schooling or upbringing, voluntaryists disavow ALL forms of taxation and ALL forms of government. Constitutions and politics do not override the individual's responsibility to "not steal" and/or become an accessory to criminal acts. Stealing is still stealing, whether committed by government agents or individual criminals. The America Pei says we lost suffered from this moral deficiency, since its inception. We, its heirs, are still battling for the recognition that all forms of taxation are theft.

If you are interested in reading Pei's original article, which I recommend because of its emphasis on "freedom from government," please [click here](#).

Sincerely in voluntaryism,
Carl Watner