

# IRET Byline

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## Osgood Hits It On the Money

Occasionally, IRET reprints or excerpts articles, speeches, and other materials by public policy makers or leaders in the business, academic, or media communities that provide unique perspectives or analyses of pressing economic policy concerns.

We think you'll enjoy these two recent commentaries by CBS Radio Network News commentator Charles Osgood.

Norman B. Ture  
President

March, 2, 1993

## *Tax Refund Blues*

The Osgood File. I'm Charles Osgood on the CBS Radio Network. This is the time of year a lot of people start working on their taxes. Others will wait until the last minute, of course. But especially for those of you expecting refunds, the sooner you file, the sooner you can get your money. For the middle-class taxpayer this may be the last time for a long time, that the concept of refund will even be a consideration.

[To the Tune of "Dog Faced Soldier"]

*It's almost time for you, to file for 1992  
For you're a middle-class taxpayer I can see.  
It makes you feel so snug and warm, to take that old 1040 form  
And figure out what this year's refund's gonna' be.  
But every statement that I hear from all the President's men,  
Suggests that you'll never see another refund again.  
The plan they say they're gonna' pass, is aimed straight at the middle class.  
So keep your seat belt tight the ride could get real rough.  
In the campaign he promised you, there'd be a tax cut coming through  
But now he says you aren't paying near enough.  
In every article I read it says the government's broke.  
Guess who's gonna' pay? My friend, can't you take a joke?  
If you should have the luck, to ever make yourself a buck,  
There is one thing you can depend upon for sure.*

*The good old U.S.A. is gonna' take that buck away.  
They're gonna' call you rich and see to it you're poor.  
If you're a middle-class taxpayer don't get all upset.  
You know you'd have to pay tax on any state refund you get.  
So feel fuzzy and feel warm, about that old 1040 form  
You're gonna' think these were the good old days somehow.  
For every dollar they tax you, they'll spend \$1.32.  
Which is exactly how we got where we are now.*

The Osgood File. Charles Osgood on the CBS Radio Network.

March 4, 1993

***When It Comes To Cutting Government Waste,  
There's No Free Lunch***

The Osgood File. I'm Charles Osgood.

President Clinton wants us to write him or Vice President Gore, and for the price of a postage stamp, we can tell him any ideas we have about how the government should be changed. Or to use the toll free 1-800 numbers that various government agencies have set up. You can call the Treasury Department, for example, at 1-800-359-3898 and give them your financial and fiscal ideas. The fact that these are toll-free calls doesn't mean that they're free. It only means that the caller doesn't have to pay. Somebody does have to pay.

One of our serious problems in this country is that the public has been conditioned to think that when the government does something for them for no charge, it is free. It is not free. We are never going to solve the deficit and debt problem unless everybody in the government from President Clinton on down stops perpetuating the fiction that anything the government does for us is free.

Nothing is free. If you write your suggestions to the U.S. government, Vice President Gore says mark the envelope re-inventing government. And cabinet members are being asked to dedicate five to ten of the best employees they have to opening, reading and dealing with this mail. So it's not just the cost of the postage stamp, is it? It's also the cost of the five or ten employees in each department. We're already talking about hundreds of people. Nothing is free, in Washington or anywhere else.

Let's say you call the Pentagon's toll free number, 1-800-424-9121. They've had this so-called hot line there since 1979. Last year it received about 15,000 calls at a cost of \$1.2 million. That works out to \$80 a call. Tell me, is a call that costs \$80 a free call? Of course it isn't. No doubt, some excellent suggestions come in on 800 lines. It might make the government more efficient and may even save money. I'm not saying don't do this, I'm just saying the public should understand that it is not free. When we get something and somebody else pays, whether it's Uncle Sam, or the city, or an insurance company, or whoever it is, it is not free. There is no such thing as free lunch or breakfast or dinner. There is no free housing. There is no free medical care. And there never will be. And the more we think of these things as free, the more it's going to cost us.

The Osgood File. Charles Osgood on the CBS Radio Network.

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