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## Money and the Taxing Power

BY W. H. ASHBY.

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### BOOK 2—CHAPTER I.

Having, as I trust, made clear the origin, the nature, and the functions of that device which is "a money," we will now endeavor to discover the reasons which have caused governments to "coin" that "money."

The power to coin money has from remote times been the high, exclusive and sacred prerogative of the sovereign, governing power.

By the constitution of the United States the states granted to congress the exclusive power "to coin money." Any citizen who attempts to "coin" our "money" commits a high crime and is subject to imprisonment in the penitentiary. Kings have risked their lives contending for the high prerogative and right to coin money. The states of the Union are, by the constitution, deprived of the power to coin our money, and congress alone has that prerogative.

The circumstances which have always surrounded it, and the vast importance always attached to it, prove that it is a power of vast and mighty import.

Notwithstanding it has been the most precious and highly prized prerogative of kings and is exclusively committed by the constitution to the congress of the United States, numerous "authorities" assert that no more important function is involved than the mere act of "certifying the weight and fineness of the metal used."

Were this theory correct, and nothing more important were involved than the mere act of certifying the weight and fineness of the metal, it is at once apparent that the importance of the function has been foolishly magnified by kings and by our constitution, and that the magnitude of the service involved would correspond more nearly with the dignity of a notary public or justice of the peace, than with that of a king or a congress.

Moreover, the purpose ascribed by these same "authorities" for the exercise of the power to coin our money, is to "furnish the people with a circulating medium," the paramount duty of the power having control being to see to it that the "circulating medium" shall be "sound and stable."

The authority of the "Professors of Economics" is a good deal weakened, in my estimation, upon all these points, by the discovery, already set forth, that their opinions upon every matter heretofore involved in the investigation have been shown to be monstrously erroneous and generally absurd.

It is to be observed that congress is clothed by our constitution with the exclusive power to coin our money. Now, we have found in our preceding investigation that the sole purpose of governments in instituting the device properly called a "money," is to enable those governments to exercise the taxing power, and that its use to "facilitate exchanges" is a mere voluntary adaptation of it to that use. History forbids us to expect generosity or consideration for the welfare of the people as a motive for governmental action.

Accordingly, having discovered that the device called a money was not instituted for the purpose of enabling the people to easily and readily exchange their commodities, but on the contrary that the device called a money was created to enable the government to support and maintain itself by the exercise of the taxing power, we are prepared to expect that when the government "coins" that "money," it is for some purpose beneficial to itself and not for the disinterested purpose of "supplying the people with a sound and stable circulating medium."

Finding that the device which is a money was instituted as a necessity in exercising the taxing power, the presumption arises that every governmental dealing with that device (including the act of "coining" it) is in some way connected with the process of exercising the taxing power. A presumption arises, therefore, that when government coins our money, the process is part of the machinery of taxation, and stands in some relation

to the raising of the public revenues.

That such may be the fact, and yet have remained hidden from the "authorities" upon money, will not be more strange than the incontestable fact that the "money" symbol, which is to be "coined," was never suspected by those "authorities" to have found its origin in the necessities arising out of the process of taxation. And yet such was beyond question the cause of its institution; and not any imaginary necessity arising out of the difficulties of exchanging commodities for each other.

Indeed it is manifestly too flattering to the "authorities" to concede even this; for the real truth is that those "authorities" never suspected the existence of that which is truly a "money," but erroneously applied that word to the material substance upon which the symbol constituting money had been stamped.

Let us go again into the public offices of present and past ages and further inquire there into the processes and mechanism employed in the exercise of the taxing power, and see whether we find there the origin of "coin" and the true purpose of exercising the power to coin money. If we carefully investigate in those public offices, we find that in every nation the tax levy therein expresses the appraised or estimated quantity of demand for the taxable things included in the lists; and that appraisal is the "value" of all such taxable wealth for purposes of taxation, uttered in the term of money, aided by the numerals.

Before there were any "coins," and when the tax was paid in the specific things taxed, it necessarily would be the rule to give to the taxpayer, upon payment of his taxes, a certificate or token in the nature of a receipt, showing that he had delivered to the government the quantity of value expressed in the tax levy, as his share of the public burden. It would also necessarily be the rule that such certificate would set forth or express upon its face, that quantity of value in the money symbol, aided by the numerals, identically as expressed in the tax levy.

No person even now thinks of paying his taxes without demanding and receiving such certificate that he has paid the quantity of value therein expressed, for the year named. The difference is that the governments in our day compel the taxpayer to give to the government, not the things which are taxed and which the government needs to carry on its operations, but instead thereof "coin," which has become the means employed by governments to procure those things; and when we now thus pay a tax levy against us, although the records are vastly more perfect and accurate than anciently, yet we carefully take from the collector a certificate setting forth the payment of a specific quantity of value, expressed in the certificate or tax receipt, as in the tax levy, by the use of the money symbol and the numerals.

It cannot have been otherwise, than that in some form the same character of certificates of payment must have been anciently given when the taxpayer delivered to the collector the specific articles which the king needed to maintain his state, and in which all taxes were at that time paid. If an attempt should be made by the taxing authorities to collect the tax for the same year a second time, the taxpayer would present his certificate or tax receipt, which would be conclusive proof that he had already paid that tax levy by delivering to the government the quantity of value assessed against him.

Now, history informs us that it has been the almost uniform and invariable rule with all governments, ancient and modern, to cause, or at least to permit, what is now called a "deficit" in the revenues. By this term is meant that governmental expenses have exceeded the revenues. There has been employed to remedy this, in all ages, and in nearly all cases a process called "anticipating the revenues."

(Continued in Two Weeks.)

# Seven

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