

Sydney Mayers

VIEWS THE NEWS

New York's Governor has been urging a rise in automobile license costs, insisting his "no new taxation" pledge would not thereby be violated, since the charges involved are "fees" and not taxes. But both residents and legislators of the state, unmoved by His Excellency's logic, have joined voices in a chorus of "a tax is a tax is a tax."

* * * * *

Another intriguing example of "when is a tax not a tax?" is the widening movement on the part of many state administrations, faced with mounting expenses and increasing opposition to new or higher taxes, to permit or extend *pari-mutuel* betting at thoroughbred and harness-racing tracks, and in some cases to legalize off-track wagers—with the state, of course, receiving "a piece of the take." Disregarding (if we can) the moral and ethical aspects of the matter, we must be at least amused by the specious reasoning that appropriating part of one's bankroll is not a tax, merely because it is called by another name.

* * * * *

The demand of those of us who enjoy a Corona or a stogie has encouraged the annual importation of thousands of pounds of tobacco from Cuba—but due to the antics of Senor Castro, imports of the nicotineous leaf from that happy little island are now banned. However, thanks to the ubiquity of economic laws (supply and demand, for example), we shall not be denied our smoky solace, for the alert tobacco growers of New England have been quick to meet our desires, and soon our smoke rings will come from cigars called not "Havanas," but "Connecticuts."

Sharply rising consumption and continually tightening supplies of sugar have resulted in soaring prices throughout the world, trading quotations for this tasty sweetening having recently reached a 40-year peak in the United States commodity market. At the risk of being thought repetitious (which we are), we take the liberty of observing that the law of supply and demand just cannot be ignored, broken or repealed.

* * * * *

Many questions have been asked about the four-month New York newspaper strike, one of the most frequent being "why did it last so long?" While a single answer would be an oversimplification, it might be interesting to point out that when the printers were "on the job," they worked for an average wage of \$145 a week, but as the strike progressed (assuming they did not take other positions), they were receiving an average weekly return of \$120 (i.e.: \$70 in union strike benefits and \$50 in state unemployment payments)—tax free and *without* working.

* * * * *

In The Netherlands, where dairy farmers are subsidized by the government, butter sells for 56 cents a pound, while in neighboring Belgium, whose dairymen enjoy no such privilege, a pound of this nutriment costs 91 cents. As a result, despite diligent efforts to prevent it, some 45 tons of butter are smuggled from Holland into Belgium every day—which clearly constitutes an illustration of Belgian frugality, a tribute to Dutch ingenuity, and further evidence that if there is a ready seller and a willing buyer, the twain shall surely meet.