



The Income Tax: A Study of the History, Theory and Practice of Income Taxation at Home and Abroad (Classic Reprint)

Edwin R. A. Seligman

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Excerpt from The Income Tax: A Study of the History, Theory and Practice of Income Taxation at Home and Abroad

The present volume was begun seventeen years ago. At the time of the discussion of the income tax which culminated in the law of 1894, when practically nothing had been written on the subject in this country, I undertook to make researches into the history of taxation in the American colonies and states which might throw light on the question. The results of some of these studies were published in 1894-5, and constitute the earlier chapters of Part II of the present work. I proposed at the time to continue these studies and to publish a book on the general subject. The income tax decisions of 1895, however, were at once recognized as putting a temporary quietus on any legislative programme, and I turned aside from the project until the time should seem more propitious. The renewed agitation looking toward a federal income tax which eventuated in the submission of the Sixteenth Amendment afforded this opportunity, and accordingly my earlier researches have been completed and brought up to date, with the results herewith presented. As it seems probable that we shall before long have an income tax in the United States, my chief object in writing this book has been to set the subject in a somewhat clearer light and to aid the legislator in constructing a workable scheme.

It may appear to some that too much attention has been paid to the historical side of the subject. It seemed to me, however, that the most important lesson to be learned from experience was the gradual transition in public sentiment from a position of uncompromising hostility to one of virtual acquiescence. Such a lesson, however, can be impressed only after a full and thorough presentation of the facts.

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