

= The Trouble with Trillions =

" The Trouble with Trillions " is the twentieth episode in the ninth season of the American animated television series The Simpsons . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on April 5 , 1998 . It was written by Ian Maxtone @-@ Graham and directed by Swinton O. Scott III . The episode sees Homer being sent by the Federal Bureau of Investigation to try to obtain a trillion dollar bill that Mr. Burns failed to deliver to Europe during the post @-@ war era .

= = Plot = =

All of Springfield is rushing to send out their tax returns just before midnight on April 15 . Homer realizes he did not file his tax return . He rushes and provides false information before driving to the post office . The IRS discovers Homer 's fraud and he is arrested . Held by the government , Homer says he will do anything to stay out of prison . Agent Johnson of the FBI decides that Homer can be useful . With a hidden microphone under his shirt , Homer uncovers that his coworker Charlie leads a group planning to assault all government officials , but is arrested by the FBI for conspiracy .

With his superiors impressed , Johnson sends Homer on a secret mission . They reveal that in 1945 , President Harry S. Truman printed a one trillion @-@ dollar bill to help reconstruct post @-@ war Europe . He handed the bill over to Montgomery Burns to transport to the Europeans . However , the money never arrived and the FBI suspects Burns still has the money with him . Homer is sent in to investigate . Arriving at the Burns estate , Homer searches for the money before Burns , who believes Homer is a reporter from Collier 's magazine , reveals that he kept the money on his person . Johnson and Agent Miller burst in and arrest Burns . Burns shouts how the government oppresses the average American . Moved by Burns 's speech , Homer knocks out the FBI agents and frees Burns .

The two men hurry to obtain Smithers for help , who suggests they leave the country . Burns takes Smithers and Homer in his old plane , setting off to find an island and start a new country . Over the Caribbean , Burns finds a fine island , although it already has a name and is in fact the country , Cuba . Going before Fidel Castro , Burns fails to buy the island when Fidel asks to see the trillion @-@ dollar bill , and is handed the bill . He refuses to give it back . The episode immediately cuts to a scene where Burns , Smithers , and Homer are on a makeshift raft . Burns announces he will merely bribe the jury when he , Smithers and Homer are put on trial .

= = Production = =

The episode was written by Ian Maxtone @-@ Graham , though the original draft of the plot was much different . Originally , Homer was to learn that he was a Native American , and would try to exploit it to not have to pay taxes . The idea had been going well for a few days , but the staff did not actually know whether Native Americans had to pay taxes . When the writers found out that they did , the whole plot had to be scrapped . Executive producer Mike Scully 's brother Brian pitched the idea of the trillion @-@ dollar bill , which they accepted , as they were out of ideas .

= = Cultural references = =

The scene where the FBI agent sits near Homer is a reference to the film JFK . While Homer , Mr. Burns , and Smithers are in Cuba , a billboard can be seen with a picture of Che Guevara being used to advertise Duff Beer .

= = Reception = =

In its original broadcast , " The Trouble with Trillions " finished 51st in ratings for the week of March 30 ? April 5 , 1998 , with a Nielsen rating of 7 @.@ 5 , equivalent to approximately 7 @.@ 4 million viewing households . It was the third highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network that week ,

following World 's Wildest Police Videos and Melrose Place .

Since airing , the episode has received mixed reviews from television critics . The authors of the book I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide , Warren Martyn and Adrian Wood , did not enjoy the episode , calling it , " Rather dull and unfunny " , adding , " A mediocre episode at best that makes Burns out to be altruistic (which he 's not) and very stupid in letting Castro have his money (which he so wouldn 't) . " The Daily Telegraph characterized the episode as one of " The 10 Best Simpsons TV Episodes " . The article noted the episode contained " one of the few gags in comedy history about relying too heavily on surveillance photography in spying " .

Ian Jones and Steve Williams for Off the Telly criticized all of season 9 for lacking an episode that centered on Burns , as they consider Burns to be the crux of many good episodes , though they noted that " The Trouble with Trillions " came the closest , with Burns having a supporting role . In a review of The Simpsons ' ninth season , Isaac Mitchell @-@ Frey of the Herald Sun described the episode as " brilliant " , and highlighted it along with episodes " Bart Carny " and " The Joy of Sect " .

In the United Kingdom , the episode was screened on BBC Two in January 1999 , before any other episode from season six or later were seen by viewers , as part of a night of Cuba @-@ themed programming .