

[GET] A Fine Mess: A Global Quest for a Simpler, Fairer, and More Efficient Tax System



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Best-selling author T. R. Reid voyages around the world to solve the urgent problem of America's failing tax code, unraveling a complex topic in plain English and telling a rollicking story along the way. The US tax code is a total write-off. Overstuffed with loopholes and special interest provisions, it works for no one - except tax lawyers, accountants, and corporations, that is - certainly not me and you. Not for the first time, we have to tear it up and start over. That happened in 1922, and again in 1954, and again in 1986. There's a pattern here; we reach this point every 32 years. Which means the next complete re-write of the tax code is due in 2018. Can we write a new tax code that is fair and simple? Can we cut tax rates and still bring in the revenue required? In fact, we can - by learning from the world's other democracies. Around the world, wealthy democracies, from Estonia to New Zealand to the UK, have all reformed their tax codes, while the US has languished. With his penchant for making complex subjects accessible and even fun, T. R. Reid travels the world in order to find out what makes for good taxation (if that's not an oxymoron!) and brings that knowledge home. So byzantine are the current statutes that by the government's own estimates, Americans spend six billion hours and 10 billion dollars every year preparing and filing their taxes. In the Netherlands it takes 15

minutes! Brilliantly successful American companies like Apple, Caterpillar, and Google pay effectively no tax at all because of loopholes which allow them to move profits offshore. Indeed, the dysfunctional tax system has become so easy to dodge that it is a major cause of economic inequality, as Warren Buffet and Thomas Piketty have pointed out. But it doesn't have to be this way, the ever-intrepid Reid proves, crisscrossing the globe, from the Czech Republic to Mexico. Doing our taxes may never be America's favorite pastime, but it can and should be so much easier.



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