

An Email Sent to a Friend

By Phillip W. Weiss

You sent me a blurb from a friend of yours who apparently is unhappy with the plethora of taxes paid by the American people. The blurb includes a list of taxes that are the source of your friend's apparent annoyance followed by the following assertion: "Not one of these taxes existed 60 years ago, & our nation was one of the most prosperous in the world. We had absolutely no national debt, had a large middle class, and Mom stayed home to raise the kids." The question is: Were the American people better off sixty years ago without the taxes listed in the blurb? Certain statistics seem suggest that the answer to that question is no. Compared to now, in 1950 the infant mortality rate was over four times higher; average life expectancy was over ten years lower; the population was significantly less educated, and the economy was much smaller, meaning that people in general were much poorer. Does that mean that no one was better off in 1950? No! Maybe for some, things were better, but the statistics seem to suggest otherwise.

"Nostalgia has a way of glossing over the negative." – Phillip W. Weiss

"Never try to masquerade an opinion as a fact." – Phillip W. Weiss

Life expectancy in the United States

1950: 68.20 years

2010: 78.42 years

Source: http://www.data360.org/dsq.aspx?Data_Set_Group_Id=195

Level of education in the United States

In 1950 approximately 36 percent of persons 25 years and older was a high school graduate or more; in 2003: 84.6 percent.

In 1950 approximately 5 percent of persons 25 years and older had a Bachelor's degree or more; in 2003: 27.2 percent.

Source: <http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/p20-550.pdf>

Infant mortality rate in the United States

1950 infant mortality rate: 29.2 per 1000 live births

2003: 6.9 per 1000 live births

2005: 6.3 per 1,000 live births

sources: <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0779935.html>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Infant_mortality

Gross Domestic Production in the United States

1950 \$293.7 billion

2010 \$14,508.2 billion.

Source: http://www.usgovernmentspending.com/us_gdp_history