PS for 8-10-89 THE INJUSTICE OF RAISING TAXES

The night hardly passes without television newscasts and newspapers embellishing some story with a "spin" demanding that President Bush agree to raise taxes in order to increase aid to the poor (or the homeless, or the students, or the elderly, or whatever is the sob story of the day). But the American people are not going to stand for any more taxes – in fact, they are demanding a rollback of the present unjust tax burden now oppressing employed parents who are trying to raise and support their own children.

That doesn't mean the American people are not compassionate and caring; indeed, they are the most generous people in the world. It means that productive Americans are tired of being forced to support the non-productive at a better standard of living than taxpayers can give to their own families.

A typical tear-jerking newspaper article appeared recently in the Quincy (Massachusetts) **Patriot Ledger** headlined "Welfare mother says state freezing her out." The accompanying picture shows the mother, Marjorie Livingston, and her three children, ages 11, 7 and 5.

The editorial thrust of this "news" article is to make the reader feel guilty that welfare benefits are parsimonious, and sympathy for the family because it is not getting an increase in benefits. But let's read the article carefully and see how much she is actually getting.

Livingston receives $628 a month in direct cash. Her actual "take" from the taxpayers is more than three times that amount.

Livingston gets a federal housing voucher that pays $592 of her monthly rent for a three-bedroom house. She only has to pay $58 a month in cash.

She now receives $14 monthly in fuel assistance ($168 for the year). (This was a reduction; last year her fuel grant was $750 for the year.)

She receives $162 monthly in food stamps. Her children receive free school lunches daily on school days, and one child receives breakfast in the Head Start program. Valued at $1 per meal, this is $4 a day for 180 school days, or $720 a year which averages out at a monthly subsidy of $60. She also gets food from the emergency food center, which we will estimate at $15 monthly.

Her children get a clothing allowance of $160 per child per year, which averages out at $40 per month. The child in Head Start enjoys an equivalent preschool value of $100 a month.

Medicaid covers the family's medical bills from orthodontia to eye glasses. The equivalent cost of health and dental insurance would be at least $250 a month.

The welfare department pays for Livingston to take two courses at the local community college. That averages out at a value of $70 monthly. (Livingston previously defaulted on a collge student loan.)

So, Livingston's tax-paid benefits add up to $1,931 per month or $23,172 per year. And it's all tax free!

Now let's compare Livingston's situation with a single mother working to support three children who is earning $23,172 per year. She has to pay $1,646 in federal income taxes, plus $1,740 in Social Security taxes, plus $656 in Massachusetts state income taxes, making her tax bill $4,042. So her spendable income is only $19,130 compared to the welfare mother's $23,172.

Furthermore, there is no way to calculate the enormous bonus to the welfare recipient in the hours each week which the welfare system allows her to spend with her children. The employed parent, who is conscientiously trying to stay off of public assistance, sacrifices all those hours that could be spent with her children.

Livingston complains that it's hard to make ends meet, saying "I think we should be getting increases." She gripes to the reporter "My kids still go without a lot of things."

But children of low-income employed parents "go without" a lot of things, too. That's because employed parents pay so much of their annual income in taxes to support Dukakis-style social spending programs.

The father of the Livingston children (the article doesn't say whether or not the couple was married) skipped out when the third child arrived. The government apparently has no interest in locating him and requiring him to support his family; it's just so much easier to raise taxes and force the law-abiding, hard-working taxpayers to assume the cost of his responsibilities.

This analysis shows why Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis, whose extravagant social spending programs have plunged his state's bond rating to the second-lowest in the country, is openly jeered on radio talk shows and even on bumper strips. The tax issue is the principal reason why George "read my lips" Bush's standing in the polls has risen to 70 percent approval, while Massachusetts polls show Dukakis with 70 percent negatives.