



Origins of the American Income Tax: The Revenue Act of 1894 and its Aftermath

Richard Joseph

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Why do critics want to pull up the income tax by its roots? Why do we have an income tax altogether especially if its principles are no longer workable and the tax no longer serves its intended purpose? Or are the roots, in fact, still viable? This compelling book seeks answers to those questions in long-forgotten archives of tax history. Drawing on rare records from Congress, Richard J. Joseph demonstrates how the idea of relating taxes to individuals and businesses evolved during 1893-1895, leading in 1894 to enactment of the first American income tax legislation. That initial law, he notes, was intended to create a permanent and a fair "ability-to-pay" system. With an eye for detail Joseph explores ways in which it would serve as a model for future revenue. He explains how global and domestic changes have rendered it passe'. And he shows how much of that early law despite its swift demise in the case of *Pollock v. The Farmers Loan & Trust Company* informs our current federal taxation system.

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