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## Letters

### Tax assailed

"A science tax on information?" (SN: 1/24/87, p.57) is bad economics. A sales tax on published information will open the door to other national sales and consumption taxes. Besides being regressive and coercive, such sales taxes help stifle the very activities being promoted.

The ultimate beneficiaries will be landowners, since the externalities of social services are eventually reflected in increased land values. This ends up as an income transfer from the poor and middle class to wealthy scientists and large landowners. A better approach would be to tax land directly for such general government services or to use funds from foundations for art and information.

Fred Foldvary  
Economics instructor  
Henry George School of Social Science  
Berkeley, Calif.

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Cover: Though lead was phased out of interior paints and most exterior paints by 1977, there's still plenty of it covering walls throughout the United States. And that's one reason why peeling, lead-based paint, along with automotive exhaust, remain major sources of lead toxicity in children. But new research is indicating there may be ways to limit the risk of toxicity from this and other environmental toxicants, and to measure the development of such toxicity in persons not yet acutely ill.



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In 1765 the British Parliament, to defray some of the expense of the French and Indian War, levied a "small" tax on printed information that passed among the colonials who had benefited from the successful outcome of that war. Most everyone knows how that turned out.

In 1987, a congressional lobby, the National Coalition for Science and Technology (NCST), has "crafted a plan to generate additional revenues for future science budgets: a tax of 0.1 percent on the sale of printed or electronic information." We seem to have gone full circle.

It would appear that the NCST folks who "crafted" that plan were absent from school when they discussed the American Revolution and the First Amendment to the Constitution.

The intellectual arrogance of those who do things for us (in spite of our own wishes) is most unsettling. Today, it's a minority group of scientists with political clout; prior to the

Revolution, it was a minority group of British merchants who lobbied Parliament, and set in motion the dissolution of the British Empire.

Donald Chandler  
Lincoln, Calif.

A national sales tax on information to support "science" with a bone thrown to the arts? What kind of mind came up with this idea? Clearly one incapable of gaining freely offered support!

Any tax on information distribution would be one more blow against our cherished freedoms and should not stand up to challenge on constitutional grounds. Can you imagine the IRS peering into every aspect of information distribution?

R. A. de Forest  
McMinnville, Ore.

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