

'Revenue' means to come back. Tax revenue quite lit...

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I noticed part of [an old post of mine](#) being cited on Twitter yesterday. It was as follows:

This is fascinating. What it shows is the etymology of the word revenue:

As a commentator, [using the name Calgacus](#), said in a comment on the blog yesterday:

Revenue is a pretty good word to use for taxation. What is bad is the idea that it provides income for the state. Revenue comes from re + venir; means to come BACK. It encapsulates the idea that taxation returns unto Caesar what originally came from Caesar, the correct spend first, tax later order.

This is, of course, the idea implicit in modern monetary theory, but that theory is simply a description of reality in this regard. As a matter of fact government spending has to precede taxation or there is no money available with which tax might be paid.

I always wonder why this is so hard to understand.

What I can, however, relate is a story told to me by a director of one of the UK's tax justice organisations before we parted company. Discussing this issue he told me that if he admitted that tax did not fund public services, as I argued, then his whole business model was going to fail. As a result he said that he was not going to admit that truth, even if he knew I was right.

Are politicians in the same boat as that person? Do they think their livelihoods rely on denying economic reality and so they won't go near it? If so, what state are we in?