

1 **Who pays the bill?**

2 *(Original at*

3 http://www.economist.com/opinion/displaystory.cfm?story_id=15606221)

4 Running a public-sector deficit is very much similar to drinking in a pub:
5 the arguments start when the tab has to be paid. The battles will be all
6 the more fierce this time around because the deficits are so large.

7 Public-sector pensions and health care are part of the problem. They
8 impose too great a burden on the next generation. Middle-aged Americans
9 have written cheques on the accounts of their children. Those promises
10 need to be scaled back to get public finances in order, for example by
11 raising the pension age.

12 The immediate fight, however, which is already starting to break out in
13 many European countries, is between raising taxes and cutting public
14 spending. Politically, the contest is evenly matched, with powerful unions
15 against the biggest taxpayers—corporations and high-earners—who often
16 have the ear of politicians. In terms of economics, though, the bulk of the
17 adjustment should come in the form of spending cuts.

18 This is not just ideological bias on our part; economic studies suggest that
19 fiscal adjustments that rely on spending cuts do better than those based
20 on tax rises. Yes, some tax rises may be necessary, if only out of the
21 political necessity of persuading the electorate that the burden is being
22 shared. But tax rises, like Japan's in 1997, can kill a recovery.

Questions

- 1) Explain the similarity between spending money in a pub and running public debt used by the article in lines 4 to 5.
- 2) Line 5 uses a *synonym* (word having roughly the same meaning) for *bill*. Can you find it? Think of other ways of expressing the same concept.
- 3) What is the relation of public pensions and health care to public debt according to the article?
- 4) 'Middle-aged Americans have written cheques on the accounts of their children' (lines 8 to 9) – paraphrase this sentence with your own words.
- 5) Give *synonyms* for 'scaled back' (line 10) and 'raising' (line 11).
- 6) What is the main struggle currently starting across Europe about? Who are its protagonists? (lines 12 to 16)
- 7) What is the opinion on that struggle presented in the article? Who is right according to *the Economist*, the source of this article?
- 8) What are 'unions' (line 14)?
- 9) What is 'ideological bias' and whom does 'our' refer to (line 18)?
- 10) What are the arguments used in the last paragraph to support the conclusion?
- 11) Do you agree with the conclusion of the article? What is your view on public deficits and debt in general? Do you think the Czech Republic should start saving as soon as possible? Or do you think some intervention on part of the state is needed to keep the economy going these days?

Vocabulary

fierce (line 6) – violent in force or intensity; extremely bad or severe

impose a burden on sb. (8) – to lay on or set as something to be borne, endured, obeyed, fulfilled, paid

get st. in order (10) – make things appropriate; remedy

the bulk of st. (16) – the greater part; the majority

You can find additional explanation and more examples to help you understand and use English words and phrases at <http://dictionary.reference.com>, <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>, or <http://www.merriam-webster.com/>

Přejeme Vám mnoho studijních úspěchů.

Tým jazykové skupiny Spěváček: