

WXPost *Quick, Before* MAR 14 1974

He's Repossessed

By Art Buchwald

Mr. Maurice Dirk, a lifelong admirer of President Nixon, has just started a new organization called the Committee to Refinance the American President.

In his plush offices on Pennsylvania Avenue, Mr. Dirk told me, "From all indications, President Nixon will have to pay anywhere from \$350,000 to \$500,000 in back taxes, that is to say money that he deducted which probably will be disallowed. Now to the average person that may not be much, but for the President this is a large sum of money. I think we, as Americans, should get together and pay the back taxes for him."

"I'm all for it, but how do we do it?" I asked.

"The easiest thing would be for Congress to pass a law making it possible for everyone filing a tax return to check off one dollar on *our* taxes to pay the President's penalties. In that way all the IRS would have to do is transfer the money from one account to the other."

"I'm not sure Congress would do that."

"Neither am I," Mr. Dirk said. "That's why I started the Committee to Refinance the American President. It would give companies such as ITT, Gulf and American Shipbuilding, as well as public interest groups like the American milk producers industry and individuals like Robert Vesco a chance to show how much the presidency means to them. It would be an opportunity for everyone to become directly involved with the President's tax problems and share in restoring our faith in the American system."

"There are some American people who might balk," I warned Dirk.

"They will until they realize what is at stake. The worst way you could cripple the American presidency is to make the leaders of the nation pay back taxes. How can the President concentrate on the great problems of the world when the Internal Revenue Service puts a lien on his salary? Suppose the IRS decides to take San Clemente or Key Biscayne away from Mr. Nixon?"

"If you make him pay back all the money the IRS says is due them, the President will have to change his lifestyle. He will be unable to give dinners for heads of state or congressmen. He will have to cut out trips to Camp David. The IRS would put him on an allowance and that would be the end of taking his family to Trader Vic's. They might even make the President get rid of a couple of his dogs. You don't know how vindictive the IRS can be when they go after you."

"It makes you sick when you think of it," I said.

"The question the American people must ask themselves is do we want a poverty stricken President who eventually will have to apply for welfare, or do we want one who is free of the tax burdens that affect the rest of us?"

"There is no question in my mind," I told Dirk.

"The Committee to Refinance the American President will launch a nationwide appeal this month to coincide with the 1974 tax season which, as you know, ends on April 15. We will ask Americans as they fill out their returns to remember Mr. Nixon's tax problems, and to ask themselves not what the President can do for them, but what they can do for the President."

"I'm sure you'll be oversubscribed," I said. "Does the President know you've started this organization?"

"No," said Dirk, "And everyone in the White House has orders not to tell him."