

'Tax Reform' Absurdity

... didn't want to ...

... didn't want to ...

... didn't want to ...

... didn't want to ...

... didn't want to ...

... didn't want to ...

... didn't want to ...

Here's a guy who, while spending millions just to ...

... Presidential veto on a two-buck minimum wage bill.

Here's a robot who can scan the income tax form for loopholes, miss those you can drive a Brinks truck through, and propose chomping off the minimal tax relief now available to an ordinary citizen whose medical bills have been catastrophic.

The first step in this direction came last spring when Nixon's Treasury Department popped it as a "reform" program. Then it was in milder form. Obviously the Nixon people thought we were getting away with too much, and thought to clip us sharply, if only to remind us of who's in charge.

In full flower, the program went a step further — went THE step further last week. It was proposed to do away with the medical deduction entirely, then perhaps, maybe, who knows, tie in a medical insurance plan we'd buy with the money instead, we'd see.

Nixon himself, while all this was going on, was admitting coyly that he'd paid no income tax on what certainly looks like a handsome profit on his fast realty shuffle at San Clemente. It was a matter of dispute, he said, whether it was a capital gain or not. He didn't add who decides such disputes.

What makes this Nixon "tax reform" an absurdity beyond a doubt is the niggardliness of the common medical deduction as it stands. As I have noted here before, a bank of machinery gets much better tax treatment than a human, and this remains so before Nixon's wheels his hands on the tax laws.

Ordinary maintenance of the human body is not treated, for tax purposes, like ordinary maintenance of a stamping press, a milling machine, or one of Abplanalp's plastics formers that turn out those spray can valves. Ordinary depreciation isn't figured in, either, as it is for Abplanalp's plant, Rebozo's real estate, or Nixon's law library.

The best the taxers have ever allowed us is to reapportion a part of our medical costs—the catastrophic part over and above what they consider routine payments for doctors, dentists and prescription medicines.

Now comes Nixon to wipe out even this consideration, and coming as it does on top of all the other imperious Frog King chastisements of the ordinary folk, it amounts to nothing less than a damnable outrage.

The medical deduction ought to be altered, all right. But the change should permit a tax credit for every dime spent keeping the old bod in shape. The logic of this, if you earn your living with your hands and your head, is too obvious to need underscoring. Income-earning, after all, is the excuse for the warm consideration given to machines.

DICK NOLAN