

Taxes and Nixon's Home Improvements



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PRESIDENT NIXON finally may have to answer for all the money the taxpayers have spent on his seashore estates in California and Florida.

His tax returns have been investigated by the Joint Committee on Internal Revenue Taxation, whose staff has charged that he owes \$476,431 in back taxes. Part of his tax debt, the staff has concluded, is for home improvements.

This may violate the Constitution, which states the President shall receive compensation for his services but "he shall not receive within that period (his presidential term) any other emolument from the United States . . ."

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THE STORY goes back to September 1972, when we began investigating reports that the President had charged the taxpayers for personal expenditures on his vacation homes.

We uncovered facts which my associate, Brit Hume, laid before the construction engineer, William Robinson, on September 28, 1972. This was reported back to Washington in a classified memo.

"Mr. Hume identified himself as being from Jack Anderson's office," stated the memo, "and was aware that Bill Robinson was the contracting officer at the Western White House, including the residence.

"It was apparent from the conversation that Mr. Hume was aware of all the contracts, scope of work, dollar amounts

and contract numbers for all of the work which was done by Bill . . . Mr. Hume said it appeared there was something fishy going on and said he would like to see the records."

Instead of producing the records, the government covered them up. Nevertheless, we were able to report on October, 1972, that the taxpayers had helped to renovate the President's old Spanish villa at San Clemente, Calif. The President even stuck the taxpayers, we reported, for \$13,500 to buy a new furnace.

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SUBSEQUENTLY, we wrote about many other personal expenditures which the President squeezed out of the taxpayers. These ranged from \$388.78 to stop the fireplace in his den from smoking to \$621 for an icemaker that would make ice cubes without a hole in the middle. Even the cost of stamping his golf tees with the presidential logo came out of the public till.

Now, the President may have to count these expenditures as personal, taxable income. The final ruling, of course, will be up to the Internal Revenue Service which has been working closely with the congressional tax investigation.

On the House side, some Republicans are quietly trying to narrow the impeachment inquiry and to eliminate the question of home improvements. But others believe these expenditures violated the Constitution and, therefore, may be an impeachable offense.