

Chief of Tax Staff

Laurence Neal Woodworth

By WILLIAM ROBBINS

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WASHINGTON, April 4—In the final hectic days before yesterday's release of the report by the staff of the Congressional Joint Committee on Internal Revenue Taxation

about President Nixon's income taxes, some members were already looking ahead

to other legislative work. One of them handed the staff director, Laurence Neal Woodworth, a sheaf of memorandums about the tax aspect of a proposed energy measure.

About midnight, Mr. Woodworth found time to begin reading the memos, and the next day he told the author he had enjoyed himself.

"You enjoy tax legislation the way other people enjoy fiction," one of his aides commented.

Mr. Woodworth's fascination with his work has set the tone for the staff of 30 lawyers, economists and statisticians that was responsible for the study of the President's taxes. It is a group that has won a reputation for a high degree of professionalism and nonpartisanship.

Today, while secretaries and others were being bombarded with demands for copies of the report, one committee team was crowded into Mr. Woodworth's office discussing the energy legislation, some of them sitting on the floor.

Long Workdays

The easy manner apparent in their meeting had continued throughout the four-month-long study of Mr. Nixon's tax returns, many of the weeks crowded with workdays of 16 hours or longer.

Mr. Woodworth was credited by one staff member with maintaining morale during those long hours. Asked if the long hours did not bring occasional flashes of conflict and temper, the aide said:

"Oh, no. We don't allow anything like that around here."

Mr. Woodworth, a 56-year-old native of Ohio, is "most notable for his stylistic blandness," one acquaintance said today, describing a characteristic that could contribute to the staff's congeniality, despite the multiplicity of its bosses.

The staff works for both the House Ways and Means Committee and the Senate Finance Committee as well, as for 10 senior members of those committees when they sit as the Congressional Joint Committee on Internal Revenue Taxation.



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Shifts from one exacting task to another.

mittee—he has been a member since 1944 and the staff director since 1963—he has been recognized with awards that members of Congressional staffs rarely receive.

He has been presented the Rockefeller Award by the Woodrow Wilson School of Government at Princeton University and the National Civil Service League Award, both for outstanding career service.

Yet he shuns publicity about his work, fearing that personal attention could impair his effectiveness, friends say.

His manner and physical appearance would do little to attract such attention. He has learned to avoid reacting or showing any emotion at public hearings, where he sits immediately behind Mr. Mills or Mr. Long.

Slightly above medium height, he has graying brown hair, brown eyes and a small, neatly trimmed mustache. He dresses conservatively.

Holds a Doctorate

Mr. Woodworth was born in Loudonville, Ohio, on March 22, 1918, the son of a Baptist minister, and attended school, as he told one interviewer, "all over northeastern Ohio."

He was graduated from Ohio Northern College and earned a master's degree in public administration at the University of Denver. Later he won a doctorate from New York University.

In 1940, he married the former Margaret Bretz, whom he had met in college. They have four children: two sons, both now doing graduate work, and two daughters, one in college and one in high school.

In the past they have enjoyed traveling together in a camper that he still owns but now seldom finds time to use. Last year, while Congressmen were taking their August recess, he found himself unable to get away because of pressures of work on a pension bill.

While the Presidential tax study was under way he was also working on pension reform, energy and tax reform as well as on requests for advice from Congressmen. One of them said today:

"It's fantastic how he's able to shift gears and be as responsive as he is on each piece of legislation."

Avoids Publicity

A man who is believed to know more about the tax code than anyone else in Congress or its staffs, Mr. Woodworth is often seen on the floor of the House and Senate, usually at the elbow of either Representative Wilbur D. Mills, Democrat of Arkansas, chairman of Ways and Means, or Senator Russell B. Long, Democrat of Louisiana, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee.

When either of them asks Mr. Woodworth for comment, he answers in precise English.

"That is correct," he may say, or he may offer not only an explanation of the possible effects of a proposal, but also an assessment of its value.

For his work on the com-