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NYTimes

# Dialogue for the

By Russell Baker

WASHINGTON, April 5—"Did you say—?"

"\$432,787.13."

"And thirteen cents?"

"Yes, thirteen cents. Four hundred and thirty-two thousand, seven hundred and eighty-seven dollars. And thirteen cents."

"And we have to pay right away?"

"Right away. \$432,787.13."

"And thirteen cents?"

"Get a grip on yourself, Pat, and quit saying: 'And thirteen cents?' It's the four hundred and thirty-two thousand that worries me. Not the thirteen cents."

"Thirteen cents."

"I know it's a shock, darling, but don't let it crush you. I'll get the money somehow. I'll take a second job and moonlight. Why, I'll bet a man could earn \$100 a week easy, just driving a car between dinnertime and midnight, after his regular day's work was done."

"At that rate it would take you

4,328 weeks, Dick, to earn the \$432,787.13 we owe Internal Revenue. That's 83 years. You'd be 144 years old before it was all paid."

"Pat, you know I'm not the kind who gets discouraged just because there's a long row to hoe."

"But you'd be too old to drive a cab, Dick. At least in the final fifty years."

"What are you trying to tell me?"

"To take the easy way, Dick."

"Never."

"Sell your memoirs to a book publisher for a million dollars. That will pay the back taxes and leave enough over to pay the taxes on the million you'll be earning to pay the back taxes."

"Oh, Pat, others have urged me to take the easy way. 'Mr. President,' they said, 'take the easy way. Borrow the money from Bebe, sell Abplanalp another slice of the San Clemente lawn.' And do you know what I've told them?"

"You will not take the easy way."

"That's right. I have already in-

## White House

### OBSERVER

structed White House attorneys to apply for my hacking permit at the taxicab bureau."

"You know very well the Secret Service is not going to let you drive a cab alone at night."

"That's no problem. I can fit four agents in the cab when I'm cruising. When I pick up a fare the agents can get out and run alongside the taxi. They're trained for that, you know."

"If they did that, they'd be moonlighting, too, and you'd have to divide the income among the five of you. At \$20 a week it would take you 332 years to earn \$432,787.13."

"We could hold a garage sale, and if I can get back those old newspaper clippings I gave the National Archives as part of my papers we could pick up a small bundle of cash from the scrap trust."

"Too little and too late. The tax people want their money right away."

"I could do a lecture tour. If Art

Buchwald earns \$3,500 per lecture, I ought to be good for at least \$2,000. Two hundred and sixteen lectures would earn me \$432,000."

"Yes, but you'd have to do another 108 to pay the taxes on your earnings from the first 216 and another eighty to pay the agent's percentage on the 216 you did to pay the back taxes, the 108 you did to pay the current taxes, and the 80 you do to pay the agent's fee. Then, of course, you would have to do more to pay the taxes on the 80 you do to pay the agent's fee for—"

"Pat!"

"What is it, Dick?"

"Pat, you make the easy way seem very tempting."

"I'll have the White House switchboard place a call to somebody with plenty of money."

"Tell me something, Pat. What do you think real people do when they get clobbered like this by the I.R.S.?"

"They suffer, I suppose, just like us, and stagger around half in shock saying over and over: 'And thirteen cents? And thirteen cents?'"