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INCOME TAX FACTS No. 1

HOW TO SAVE TAX DOLLARS

Between now and 15 April over sixty million Americans must file a tax return to report their 1956 income to the federal government. On the basis of past experience about 1 out of every 4 returns filed will contain an error of \$2.00 or more. Last year these errors totaled over \$100,000,000.

To help you prepare a correct return and avoid mistakes that cost you tax dollars, this newspaper is printing a series of eight articles prepared with the help of the national and state organizations of certified public accountants.

Today's article deals with problems faced by almost anyone who has to make out a return. Later articles will give special hints on deductions you may take, particularly if you own a car, home or business. Use this series along with the official instruction book which comes free with your tax forms.

Common Mistakes

According to the results of a sampling by the Internal Revenue Service, the mistakes most often made by taxpayers fall into these four groups:

(1) Incorrect listing of income.

This is the main source of error, partly because of debatable questions involving business income. Individuals make too by leaving out such items as interest on savings accounts, dividends and contest winnings, or by including items which are exempt.

(2) Errors in personal deductions. This category includes the deductions taken when the 10 per cent "standard deduction" is not used. Important deductions from income are: state and local taxes, interest paid on loans, charitable contributions, medical expenses, losses from storm, fire, flood or theft.

(3) Claiming too many or too few dependents. Exemptions are allowed for the taxpayer himself and for certain persons he supports, if they fit the definitions in the instruction book.

(4) Faulty arithmetic. This is the cause of the fewest number of errors, but approximately 20 per cent of these arithmetical mistakes are made by the taxpayer against himself, resulting in approximately \$19,000,000 in overpayment of taxes.

The first thing to determine is whether you should file a return or not. Everyone whose gross income was \$600 or more in 1956 must file a return by 15 April 1957. Even if your income was less than \$600 you should file a return if any tax was withheld by your employer and you wish to receive a refund. In any case, if you had as much as \$400 earnings from self-employment you must file a return to report those earnings for social security purposes.

Non-Taxable Income

It is important to remember that all income is not taxable. You should not include in your return any income which is listed in the official instruction book as exempt. This includes interest on state and municipal bonds, most government payments to veterans and their families, life insurance proceeds upon death, gifts and social security benefits. The tax instructions from the Internal Revenue Service contain a list of the types of income which should be included and those which should be omitted from your return.

If You Changed Jobs

Here is a special point to watch if you worked for more than one employer during 1956. You may have overpaid your social security tax. Each employer is required to withhold social security amounting to 2 percent of the first \$4200 of your wages. If you worked for only one employer, this would amount to \$84. However, if you worked for several employers, more than \$84 might have been withheld. Check your W-2 withholding slips and see whether the total F.I.C.A. (Federal Insurance Contributions Act) is more than \$84. If it is, you can claim credit for the excess in the "taxes withheld" column of your income tax form.

The instruction book which comes with your tax forms gives further information. Help is also available by telephone or at offices of the Internal Revenue Service. The Revenue Service urges you to consult properly qualified advisor if you decide to seek outside help.

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