

Showdown Time at IRS Almost Here

SHOWDOWN is a gambling term referring to poker players who lay their cards on the table to determine the winner of the pot.

Showdown seems to be an appropriate term for Friday April 15. That's when citizens file their tax returns with the Internal Revenue Service to reveal who must ante up more tax cash. Probably most of those who expected refunds on advance taxes filed earlier.

The most common denominator for all forms of government is taxation. Attitudes toward taxation also may be nearly universal, because of knowledge or suspicions that someone else may be paying less taxes or receiving more benefits from the public treasury. Almost everybody pays taxes in some manner but with or without representation taxation has rarely been equalized.

"Tax reform" is a buzz term that packs a lot of political clout. Congressmen and legislators apparently view tax reform as a way to shift the burden around so they will have more money to spend. Citizens tend to hope that tax reform will actually

reduce their taxes, leaving them more of their money to spend. Lawmakers usually prevail.

Right now, proposals for tax reform are plentiful. The one that appears more likely to come through is the IRS recommendation that "tax subsidies" or "tax expenditures" be eliminated or reduced further. Those expressions are IRS terminology for deductions such as interest, contributions, age exemptions, tax credits, medical expenses, etc. It seems odd that we could be subsidized with our own money.

There was a slight decrease in tax take by all levels of government in 1982, due primarily to the recession. In 1981 federal, state and local governments took 36 cents of every dollar of national income. In 1982 they got only 35 cents because people made less money. Even Oklahoma's legislative spenders have been slowed down.

Perennial complaints that tax forms are too difficult to fill out have stimulated proposals for some kind of flat tax rate that would apply to everybody. These include sin-

gle rate income taxes, consumption taxes, value-added taxes, national sales taxes, etc.

It is claimed that those who profit from the present complicated system oppose simplification. More likely resistance is coming from those who aren't sure they would have as much money to spend.

More taxes and larger appropriations for more agencies are seen by some as solutions to almost any problem from farm surpluses to unemployment. When gasoline prices dropped below \$1 a gallon, along came the five cents a gallon tax to raise money to hire people to build and repair highways. This prompted a reader of an Oakland, CA, newspaper to write the editor:

"Since the federal government states that the five cent gasoline tax would provide 320,000 jobs, then a 10 cent tax would provide 640,000 jobs and a 50 cent tax would provide 3.2 million jobs. We could solve the entire unemployment problem with a \$1 a gallon tax, thus employing the 604 million."

Alas, there are some problems more taxation will not solve.