

A Tale of Taxes

IF GIFT-BEARING GREEKS are suspect, moralizing politicians are more so. Particularly when they moralize about the most unmoral thing in the world: taxation.

The Administration's proposal to require husbands and wives to file joint income tax reports was attacked by Congressmen on two moral grounds: (1) that it would encourage common law marriages as a means of evading the payment of taxes, and (2) that the hard-fought victory of woman to establish her individual dignity would be jeopardized.

The Congressmen who advanced these arguments, or who used them to support their votes against the bill, exhibited their low regard for the intelligence of the people.

The Government asserted that the joint returns would yield something more than \$300,000,000. Now it is evident that to yield any such large amount the incomes of wives who now file separate returns would have to be considerable. The joint return could hardly affect those many families where the wife's income is needed to eke out a livelihood.

The object of the proposal was to throw the double incomes into the higher brackets, so that they would be subject to larger surtaxes.

Would the wife whose independent income enables the family to have both town and country homes lose her identity as a person because she is forced to file a return jointly with that of her husband? Would she divorce him, or prefer the social disgrace of illicit home life, to save on her income tax? Only a Congressman could think of such a consequence.

And so, it is demonstrated that even in a time of national emergency the politician is the partner of privilege, and the taxing power of the government is used to favor those most able to bear the brunt.

When the proposal was defeated in the Congress the next step was to "broaden the base," to lower the exemptions so that more could be taken from those to whom a tax means so much less of the necessities of life. The thought cannot be that many patriots are pocket wise, in war time as well as in peace time.