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Editorial

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The JOURNAL of ACCOUNTANCY

Official Organ of the AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ACCOUNTANTS

A. P. RICHARDSON, *Editor*

EDITORIAL

Concerning Tax Experts

With the approach of the end of another calendar year we draw near to the time when the voice of the tax expert will be much heard in the land. Since the enactment of federal tax legislation the public has felt its oppression in many ways, in the list of which is the tax expert. Mind you, we don't know what a tax expert is, but we are led to believe that there must be such a thing from the frequent reiteration of assertions to that effect. Expertness in anything is an evanescent quality much like the will-o'-the-wisp—when we think we have it we have it not. It is also like personal beauty, a thing not to be extolled by the possessor. Consequently, we are led to the conclusion that there are few tax experts because most of the claims to expertness emanate from the supposed experts themselves. It is seldom that one hears a third person described as an expert in taxation. There may be a few people in the world who know all about taxation, but we have never met any of them. The best we can claim is to have met people who know enough about taxation, as Dr. Adams said at the banquet of the American Institute of Accountants, to know that they don't know all about it.

The editorial pages of THE JOURNAL OF ACCOUNTANCY last month contained a speech made by a representative of the solicitor's department of the bureau of internal revenue, in which he clearly set forth the opinion in which so-called experts are held by the treasury department. It seems that his words must have effect upon those who heard or read them.

Yet we are quite certain that within the next month or two there will appear a flood of literature in the advertising pages of papers, magazines, etc., and in circular letters, describing the peculiar abilities of some person or group of persons to whom the mysteries of taxation are as an open book.

Accountants should beware of admitting even to themselves that they are experts.

Some few years ago the word "efficiency" had a great vogue. It was used and abused until to-day it has few friends. It is something like the word "intrigue" as a verb which is now distressing all friends of good English who read the daily papers. Now comes the word "expert" to take its place alongside the word "efficiency" in the discard. Accountants can do much to hasten the proper disposition of the words "tax experts" or any variant thereof.

In Owen Wister's great story of the plains, *The Virginian*, the hero advises Trampas to smile when he uses an expression relative to canine ancestry. The time seems to us to be coming when everyone who calls another a tax expert will be told to smile.

The Process of Evolution

The president of a corporation recently received from a firm of accountants a letter containing the following paragraph:

If, in preparing your return for 1917 or any subsequent years, you include as invested capital any appreciation, whether or not determined by appraisals, you should take advantage of this opportunity to avoid penalty.

The president has marked the last phrase of the above paragraph and has written the following comment on the letter:

This is a good idea; if people don't employ you after ordinary advertising, try scaring them into it.

Proper Publicity

Now that the American Institute of Accountants has gone officially on record as opposed to professional advertising the question may be regarded as settled so far as personal advertising is concerned in the case of a professional man or woman. There is apparently, however, a feeling that there should be something in the way of educational propaganda designed to explain to the public what accounting is, does and may do for better business and improvement generally. A special committee of the Institute has been appointed to investigate the whole question and bring forward positive suggestions for the consideration of the council of the Institute.

We shall watch with interest the development of the labors of this committee, and it occurs to us that a good purpose would be served if our readers having creative thoughts on the subject would communicate them to the Institute or to this magazine.

Regional Meetings

The regional-meeting idea which was inaugurated less than a year ago by a meeting held in Chicago has spread with gratifying rapidity in various parts of the country. During the past year there have been several such meetings and others are to take place. At present we have advice of a meeting to be held in Des Moines on November 11th and meetings in Hartford and Pittsburgh some time during December, the exact dates of which have not yet been fixed. In other parts of the country there will probably be similar meetings between now and next summer.

Every accountant who has an interest in his profession should make a point of attending these meetings whether he be a member of the Institute or a certified public accountant or neither. The mere fact of his membership in the profession is a card of admission.

District C. P. A. Bill

Senator Capper of Kansas has introduced in the senate of the United States a bill, No. 2351, providing for the creation of a certified public accountant board in the District of Columbia. This bill has been approved by the council of the Institute and it is hoped that it will be passed without amendment of any kind. It is particularly necessary that such a bill should appear on the statute books of the District in order to offset possible efforts to lower the value of the C. P. A. certificate by organizations operating in parts of the country in which there is no restrictive legislation. All the forty-eight states now have C. P. A. laws. The District of Columbia and Alaska are the only parts of continental United States in which there is no such legislation.

Friends of accountancy should use their efforts to encourage the enactment of Senator Capper's bill without alteration or addition.