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WELFARE CHEATERS

Much as we all hate to pay taxes, most people do support a strict enforcement of the tax laws by the Internal Revenue Service. We are usually resentful when we discover that the very rich took enormous deductions or paid no tax at all. If we do not have a strict enforcement of the tax laws, then we will have a situation under which the chronic cheaters will get by with less taxes than they should pay, but the conscientious taxpayers who pay in full will end up paying proportionately more than their fair share.

The same impartial enforcement ought to be applied to welfare. Some people infer that anyone who talks about welfare fraud is necessarily against providing for the poor and needy. This is not true.

Just like in taxes, when some cheat it shifts a greater burden onto the backs of the honest and the conscientious. Crooks are present in every occupation, and welfare is no exception. It makes sense to administer welfare on the assumption that, when things are handed out free, there are always people who try to take what they are not entitled to.

The almost unlimited potential for cheating in welfare is in dicated by the Chicago woman who has been charged with grand larceny as a result of allegedly having bilked the Illi ois Public Aid De partment of an estimated $100,000 a year through fraudulent welfare claims. While receiving welfare checks, before she fled the state, she owned three 1974 automobiles -- a Cadillac, a Lincoln, and a

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Chevrolet.

HEW Secretary Caspar Weinberger said recently that a national error-reduction drive begun in 1973 is producing results. He claimed that the overall rate for three kinds of payment errors has been lowered from 41.1 percent to 37.9 percent.

However, an HEW survey showed that nine percent of welfare.recipients are ineligible for payments they are now receiving, and another 21 percent are receiving overpayments. AFDC now costs Federal and state taxpayers about $8 billion per year. If Secretary 'Weinberger' s goals are met, we could save about $600 million annually.

One of the biggest types of fraud is practiced by the so-called absent fathers, who do a disappearing act and thereby throw their families on the welfare rolls. There are an estimated 50,000 absent fathers in New York City alone.

U S. Welfare Commissioner Robert Carleson estimates that the so-called absent fathers have already cost the taxpayers some $2 billion, and most of them can be easily traced, if authorities choose to do so. The laws of every state make it the obligation of the father to support his wife and children, and it is neither just nor generous to permit the cheaters to get out of obeying the law while conscientious fathers faithfully fulfill their duty.

The fraud in welfare is too costly to the taxpayers to allow it to continue.

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