P.S. to the NEWS
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AVOIDING INCOME TAXES

The Spiro Agnew affair has caused shock waves among his friends who never guessed he could be guilty, and also among his enemies who think he was let off too easy.

Actually, however, Agnew is not the first high Government official, nor even the first Vice President, to cheat on his income tax. Another one was President Truman's Vice President, Alben Barkley. One of the most prominent and powerful Democrats of all time, Alben Barkley failed to file any income tax returns for years, including all the time he was Vice President and some of the years he was Majority Leader of the Senate, steering through Congress the large tax increases which the rest of us had to pay.

Barkley was never subjected to the disgrace of prosecution, indictment, or forced resignation. The Government waited until after he died, and then quietly collected the back taxes against his estate.

Some commentators have tried to make capital out of Spiro Agnew's cheating on his income taxes at the same time he was making speeches about law and order. So what's new about that type of hypocrisy? Under the Kennedy Administration, the chairman of a special presidential commission -- created to draw up a code of ethics for Government employees -- failed to file any income tax returns at all for five years, although his income was more than $60,000 each year. He

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could hardly claim ignorance of the law because he had been Dean of the Harvard Law School.

His name was James Landis, and he was a tax adviser and close personal friend of the Kennedy family. He had held high positions in several Administrations. When finally caught, Dean Landis did not get the sentence ordinary citizens would have received. He was merely sentenced to a 30-day rest in the most luxurious suite in the finest hospital in New York.

Another notorious tax evader was the writer Edmund Wilson. Only two weeks after Lyndon Johnson became President, he awarded Edmund Wilson the Presidential Medal of Freedom. This is the highest Government award any civilian can receive in peacetime. One of Wilson's books was titled THE COLD WAR AND THE INCOME TAX, in which he boasted that he refused to file any income tax returns for nine years.

President Nixon, with an annual income of more than $200,000, paid an income tax of only $792 in 1970 and only $878 in 1971. Richard Nixon and Lyndon Johnson both used the same gimmick to avoid taxes. They had someone appraise their personal papers at a high value, and then they claimed a huge tax deduction for donating the papers to a library.

The question we all want answered is this: is it fair to ask the average American to pay high taxes when our leaders do not?

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