P.S. to the NEWS

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ROCKEFELLER'S GIFTS

Like many other Americans this month, I have been receiving campaign literture from eager candidates hoping to get my vote in the.November election. Last week I received' a very unusual campaign brochure. Under the candidate's picture and name, instead of a list of his qualifications for office, the following words were printed in large letters: "Never Held Public Office."

I think this candidate has accurately sensed the mood of the American people who have become suspicious of all incumbents. In the entire history of the United States, there never were two men who had more extensive and more relevant experience for the Presi dency than Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon. They spent all their lives preparing for that office. And both fell into humiliating disfavor with the voters.

Now we have a man seeking the Vice Presidency who likewise has spent his entire life preparing for the highest office in our land. It is obvious that the American voters are unimpressed with Nelson Rockefeller and his many years of experience as a public official. The mail received by -.the White House and Congress was heavily nega tive even before the recent news that Rockefeller owes about a million dollars in back taxes.

Rockefeller started out with great optimism that he would be confirmed in the post-Watergate climate by riding on the average voter's assumption that Rockefeller must be honest because he is so rich that there never would be any temptation for him to accept a

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bribe. This argument has some plausibility to the average .American trying to stretch his weekly paycheck,to cover the rising prices of groceries and home rent or mortgage payments.

The natural intuition of the .American voters, however, is now alerting them to the danger of a wealthy man who give:,money instead of takes it. Rockefeller's tax records show that he made gifts of

$50,000 to Secretary of State Kissinger, $550,000 to William J. Ronan, chairman of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, and $86,000 to L. Judson Morhouse, a former New York Republican chairman who had been convicted on bribery charges. In addition, Rockefeller and his family have contributed more than $100,000 to the campaigns of Sena tors and Representatives now in office and eligible to vote on his confirmation.

Such gifts may not have strained Rockefeller's monthly budget, but they represent a lot of money to any recipient. Even if there were no explicit commitment at the time, an implicit obligation is created for a future favor.

For the same reason that a woman should question the honorable intentions of a man who offers her a very expensive gift, so the voting public should be suspicious when Nelson Rockefeller gives large sums of money to office-holders.

It might be worse to have in high public office a Nelson Rockefeller who makes large gifts to public officials than it was to have a Richard Nixon who improved his two personal homes at the taxpayers' expenses.

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