

## Mr. Morgan and the Tax Fraud

LAST JANUARY, looking back at the troubles of the Nixon administration, Edward L. Morgan told a Wall Street Journal reporter, "If you think 1973 was bad, wait until Christmas 1974 rolls around. You'll think last year was a holiday." He was right, of course: The year brought disaster to the Nixon administration and, in passing, to Mr. Morgan as well. Last December, Mr. Morgan was an assistant secretary of the Treasury, quite pessimistic about the future of the administration but, nevertheless, still one of the bright, eager, young lawyers who had come to Washington to work for Mr. Nixon. This December, he faces a four-month prison term, an additional 20 months on probation, a felony conviction on his record, and a career that may well be ruined. It all happened because he gave too much loyalty and too much trust to the man he came to work for.

Unlike most of those former government officials who are now caught up in the criminal courts, Mr. Morgan had nothing to do with Watergate. His "one terrible mistake," to use the words of Judge Hart who sentenced him to prison, was to put the date of 1969 on a deed prepared in 1970 so that Mr. Nixon could claim an illegal deduction of almost \$100,000 on his 1969 income tax

return. Mr. Morgan did it, according to Judge Hart, "in an effort to serve with misplaced loyalty a superior who held the highest office in the land."

We understand why Judge Hart called the sentencing of Mr. Morgan the most difficult act he has had to perform in 17 years on the bench. Mr. Morgan's record was impeccable and his future bright until he got caught in the imperial atmosphere of the Nixon White House where the normal requirements of law seemed not to apply. As a result, he now stands convicted of conspiring to impede the Internal Revenue Service. It is a conspiracy of which we may not have heard the last, even though the man on whose behalf it was undertaken and who signed the tax return that formalized the fraud cannot be prosecuted because he has been pardoned.

Mr. Morgan summed up the tragedy of it all for men like himself in that interview last January. "There was a time," he said, "when I thought I'd leave the administration and people would ask, 'What have you been doing?' I'd reply: 'Working for the government, for Mr. Nixon.' I imagined them saying, 'Oh, that's great, that's exciting.' Now, I imagine they'll only say, 'Oh.'"