

# IRS Audits Democrats' Chief Strauss

By Jack Anderson  
and Les Whitten

The Internal Revenue Service, which made life miserable for Democratic national chairman Larry O'Brien with its audits of his taxes, has now moved against his successor, hard-working Robert Strauss.

**Strauss, a wealthy, outspoken Texan who is now rallying the Democrats for a fight against the Republicans in the 1974 and 1976 elections, became the subject of an IRS examination about a month ago.**

Though sure his taxes are in order, Strauss told his accountants to cooperate with the tax agents. We have learned they are studying the Strauss returns for 1970, 1971 and 1972.

The IRS office in Dallas is handling the examination, but Democratic friends of Strauss feel it was approved, if not instigated, in Washington.

Coming as it does at the same time that the IRS is probing 1968 standard bearer Hubert Humphrey's finances, these Democrats remain unconvinced that the Strauss probe is non-political.

They point to testimony in the Watergate case that the White House repeatedly tried to use the IRS as a political weapon. Now that the administration

can safely cite ex-Vice President Spiro Agnew as evidence of nonpartisanship in the IRS, the Democrats are fearful they will once again become fair game.

Humphrey's trouble with the tax men, for example, has come over testimony by a Howard Hughes emissary that he delivered \$50,000 in cash to Humphrey in 1968. But the Minnesota senator has told us it is his returns for 1970, 1971 and 1972 that the IRS seems most interested in. Meanwhile, the White House has said President Nixon is "confident" that his crony, C. G. (Bebe) Rebozo "acted in the proper fashion" in accepting a \$100,000 cash "contribution" for Mr. Nixon from billionaire Hughes.

Strauss, while no more happy than any other American to have the IRS in his files, has taken the view that the Administration is innocent of political hatchwork unless proven different.

"It is a fact that the IRS has been working with my accountant concerning the last few years," Strauss told us. "So far as I know the inquiry is routine. My accountant says the tax returns are in good order. There is no reason to suspect political motives at this time."

At the IRS, a spokesman refused even to acknowledge the

probe of Strauss' returns, much less to comment on whether it was instigated or approved by Washington.

**Bella the Diplomat**—Congress' militant Bella Abzug (D-N.Y.) is regarded by colleagues and constituents alike as a two-fisted, hard-cursing floor fighter who wins her way with chutzpa.

But the outspoken Ms. Abzug used the softness of a pussycat and the suavity of an Ivy League diplomat in negotiating the freedom of internationally known legal scholar Mme. Ngo Ba Thanh, who was locked up by the Saigon regime in 1971.

A few weeks ago, while part of a hard-working congressional anti-narcotics team in Southeast Asia, Ms. Abzug dropped in on the family of Mme. Thanh, who, like the congresswoman, is an alumna of Columbia University's law school. The family's disclosures sent her determinedly to U.S. Ambassador Graham Martin.

"The family fears for her life," Ms. Abzug quietly informed the courtly Martin. "She's suffering from asthma. Her hair's falling out. She's been on a hunger strike.

Martin murmured his sympathies. Ms. Abzug persistently went on:

"Look, Mr. Ambassador, her fate is of concern to women all over the world."

Martin nodded agreement and replied, "We're working on the case. Leave it to me. You'll be hearing from me in September."

When Martin returned to the United States for consultations, Ms. Abzug renewed her requests to him four times. Each time, Martin promised action. Finally, her persistence paid off. Mme. Thanh was freed.

**Moth Menace**—A battle over the hairy, fast-breeding tussock moth is raging within the government, with the Environmental Protection Agency squared off against the Forest Service.

The nasty insects have been chewing the needles off fir trees throughout the Northwest, leaving forests subject to fires. Only DDT, it seems, stops the gnawers. But the Sierra Club opposes DDT spraying because it kills wild life, fish and birds along with bugs.

So far, the EPA has sided with the conservationists who insist that the plague will die off automatically and that a single loophole on DDT restriction would be exploited nationwide by greedy timber barons. For a change, however, the timber men have produced some reasonable arguments, and EPA's head, Russel Train, is faced with a difficult Hobson's choice.