



Special Treatment?

Jack Anderson

THE POWERFUL chairman of the tax-writing House Ways and Means Committee, Representative Al Ullman (Dem-Ore.), was marked for a full tax audit last spring until he called Internal Revenue Commissioner Donald Alexander.

Once he spoke to Alexander about it, the audit was bobtailed and Ullman's tax forms were pronounced satisfactory. No additional tax was levied. The handling of Ullman varied dramatically from the thorough going-over most taxpayers get during an audit.

Ullman's returns were flagged by the computer under a formula which is supposed to spot unusual changes in income or deductions. Agents routinely notified him that he would be audited, which is usually a long, painful process.

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AS ULLMAN remembers it, he happened to call Alexander on an unrelated matter having to do with a lost or misplaced check. He mentioned in passing the audit of his 1974 returns.

The timing was coincidental, Ullman assured us. But since he had Alexander on the phone, as the congressman tells it, he asked him whether the audit could be put off a short time. The Internal Revenue commissioner, who is beyond the telephone reach of ordinary taxpayers, quickly agreed to

the brief postponement.

It would be a "totally false and erroneous impression" to imply he was pressuring Alexander, the Ways and Means chairman told us. "At that point, you couldn't have kept me from an audit at gunpoint," he said.

At Ullman's convenience, Alexander personally arranged for two agents to drop by the congressman's Capitol Hill office. According to Ullman. "They dragged out all the books and receipts. They went through them carefully. All was in order."

He said the agents made two, possibly three visits to look at his papers. Ordinarily, an audit involves many more visits, exhaustive questions and harrowing inspections.

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BOTH ULLMAN and Alexander professed to be scandalized at the very thought that Ullman might have received special treatment merely because he writes the tax legislation, which Alexander administers.

Unlike Ullman, we were unable to reach Alexander on the telephone. Instead, his special assistant Thomas Glynn called back. He said it was "ridiculous" to suggest Alexander would grant a tax favor to Ullman or anyone else and made a veiled threat against us if we reported otherwise.