

Recently I have referred to the nearby mountaintop with the name of Hitler's. In doing this, I was not intending a mere crack, for the evidence has been accumulating that it is not either unkind or irrelevant. That was Hitler's hideout, when he wanted to isolate himself from government, which he ran as a personal possession. Nixon's isolation from the government, its officers and agencies, is anti-democratic, whatever he chooses to give as his reason for it. It means one-man control, and that is not the Constitutional concept.

Recently also I have made repeated references to the inability of the press to perform either its minimal duties or its traditional functions when he has been at Camp David. In the more than a month since the election, I doubt if Nixon has been in the White House two days, and I seem to recall that much of that time was devoted to social functions, not the administration of government or its affairs.

Nixon is going farther than merely making it difficult for the press to cover him at Camp David. While engaging in a false propaganda effort the purpose of which was to lie and say he had improved conditions for the press, he had made them so personally disagreeable that reporters were staying away and depending upon handouts. I made comment on the announcement of the press trailer when it was made. That turns out to be an understatement from several current sources, today's Post and Life dated 12/8/72. Life has a two-page spread (10-1), mostly a single picture of rainsoaked reporters gathered outdoors around two picnic tables, buried under thin plastic that does not cover them and rests on them, trying to use outdoor phones. One reporter is under his umbrella. (My own electrician had a dim view of these things and told me that the previous owner of our place was crazy to have an extension on his phone so he could take calls in the pool, even though the voltage is low.) Even under battlefield conditions, facilities would be better. There would at least be a tent. This is a military camp, and the scant protection of a tent on a mountaintop would present neither problems nor significant cost. The absence of what would be available under the worst conditions can't be accidental or unintended. I think this is a deliberate effort to discourage press presence at Camp David except at Nixon's behest. (Life then has a large, comfortable auditorium for them!) The sadistic politics to me clearly apparent is lined by a smaller LIFE picture, of Ron Ziegler peeking under the thin plastic with a broad laugh on his face. Life says he is "inspecting" and that he did not invite the soaked reporters inside. It also notes that this is all outside the camp itself, as I'd indicated earlier in notes indicating that even the comings and goings were secret from the press.

Much comment is possible and I think appropriate to the quotes in Lou Cannon's Post story. It deals with the excessive security and simultaneously quotes Nixon as saying he is more "relaxed" there, and "easier for me to get on top of the job". Only as a dictator, I suggest. It also suggests things about him and his attitudes, his state of mind, behind all this excessive, including electronic security, vicious dogs, marines, barbed wire, double high fences--the military works.

It is interesting to compare this with the Kennedy interregnum, where nothing was secret, all business transacted from his Georgetown home, all visitors visible, all announcements made for its doorstep, and TV cameras on duty around the clock--and during a lasting blizzard, unusually much snow for Washington.

Ziegler even refused reporters a tour of the camp. What is known seems to come from visitors, by knowledge included. Including from contractors who did work there. Cannon: "The principle charm of the place for Mr. Nixon, Ziegler has told reporters, is its privacy and the President intends to keep it that way."

An aide is quoted as saying Camp David food is better than that at the White House. The WH food is provided from funds controlled by the President, that at the Camp by the Navy, not with fancy chefs but with regular Navy mess crews. When the White House carryall stopped off at our farm, under Eisenhower, to pick up some of our produce, the mess crew was Phillipino mess boys and cooks. I met them. They all came in to look at the chickens. There was even a naval office in charge of them stationed at the White House, a Lt. Gillespie. Or, the era of Nixonburgers and NixonBurger.

I am getting an extra Post and will include that story. I would like the return of the Life picture. You should see it. Forty years ago accommodations were better in the hinterlands. I had this kind of situation once only, and I remember it vividly. I was covering a football game with Washington College, near Chestertown, Md., from a plain table on the 50 yard line and in the rain. And that was in the remote for that day countryside.

Camp David Ringed By Bristling Defense

By Lou Cannon

Washington Post Staff Writer

No signs point the way to Camp David.

The road winds narrowly from the village of Thurmont up the mountainside past a fishing lake and hiking trail, past Camp Misty Mount and Hog Rock. Halfway up, a Marine command post rises incongruously from a stand of chestnut oak and hickory trees.

The security which of necessity follows President Nixon everywhere is silent and well concealed at the White House. At the presidential retreat at Camp David in Maryland's Catoctin Mountains, it is stark and obtrusive.

Two rows of seven-foot-high electrically charged chain-link fence surround the 134 acres. On top of each runs a deadly looking roll of special concertina wire which one of the Marine guards said is "like a coiled razorblade." Between the fences there is a separate wire hooked to a sensor device.

Marines, sometimes accompanied by attack dogs, patrol the camp perimeter.

A Mile Away

More than a mile from this bristling defense line,

in the southeast corner of the camp, the President works on speeches and appointments for his second term in a comfortable lodge commanding a view both of the mountain and the valley. The living room of the lodge is paneled in red oak and has high beam ceilings and each of the four over-sized bedrooms has oak paneling and a private bath.

President Nixon, in a

brief speech from the camp on Nov. 27, said that working at Camp David gave him a better sense of perspective than the Oval Office in the White House.

"I find that up here on top of a mountain it is easier for me to get on top of the job, to think in a more certainly relaxed way at times—although the work has been very intensive in these past few weeks as it was before the other great decisions that have been made here—but also in a way in which one if not interrupted either physically or personally or in any other way, can think objectively with perception about the problems that he has to make decisions on," Mr. Nixon said.

The President's extensive use of the camp as a substitute White House is somewhat of a departure from the practice of other presidents, beginning with Franklin Roosevelt.

The camp was carved out of 6,000 acres of state and national parkland and built by Works Progress Administration labor during the Roosevelt era. Mr. Roosevelt, a former Secretary of the Navy, staffed the camp with Navy personnel and used the retreat for entertaining foreign notables. Winston Churchill and Anthony Eden were guest on

several occasions.

Mr. Roosevelt named the camp "Shangri-la" after a mythical mountain top in the novel "Lost Horizon." When Dwight Eisenhower became President, he renamed it Camp David in honor of his grandson.

In 1959, President Eisenhower met there with Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev and a new phrase entered the language—"the spirit of Camp David"—to denote a

peaceful interlude in relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. Reporters and photographers were admitted on that occasion for a rare glimpse of the presidential lodge.

The mementoes of past Presidents — including Mr. Eisenhower's one-tee golf green and the ring for Caroline Kennedy's ponies — adorn the camp. It was an occasional hiding place of every President except Harry Truman, who preferred vacationing in Key West and allowed his aides to use the camp. During the Roosevelt and Truman administrations the camp was a 90-minute drive from the White House and relatively inconvenient.

Mr. Eisenhower made the renamed retreat famous but used it far less than does Mr. Nixon. The single tee was insufficient for Mr. Eisenhower, who preferred a full round of golf on his days off.

Presidents Kennedy and Johnson used the camp occasionally, but it was never a center of administration activity.

The camp became a secure honeymoon retreat in June 1971 for Edward and Tricia Cox. The Coxes tried to keep their whereabouts a total secret but were inadvertently foiled by President Nixon, who remarked on their wedding day, "I'll have to restrict my movements."

Because of his constant desire for privacy and his fondness for uninterrupted work, Mr. Nixon uses the camp far more than any past President. The camp, which is long on solitude

Take away together

and short on sunshine because of the dense woods, is less popular with staff members used to better quarters and outside access in Washington. It is even less popular with reporters who cover the White House.

At Camp David, the reporters are jammed into a 10-foot by 50-foot white trailer where they share 10 telephones inside and another 10 outside covered by plastic sheeting. Briefings take place in the helicopter hangar.

The press trailer replaced a duckblind where reporters

used to watch the President land. The duckblind is now off limits, and the coming and going of presidential guests proceeds unobserved.

In recent days few reporters have bothered to make the trip from Washington. The briefings from Thurmont are piped into the White House press room.

Despite the armed-camp appearance at the main gate, Camp David is pleasantly rustic in the lodge area and well-appointed for a mountain retreat. Its comforts include a heated pool, a large separate dining lodge, snowmobiles and a modern movie projector. The Nixon family makes scant use of the private White House movie theater but in one weekend in 1969 watched seven films at Camp David.

Unlike the White House, the camp is completely off limits to the public and presidential press secretary Ronald Ziegler has repeatedly declined reporters' requests for a "75-cent tour."

When United Press International reporter Helen Thomas went to Camp David for an exclusive interview with Julie Nixon Eisenhower in 1969, Mrs. Eisenhower insisted on meeting her at a ranger station three miles from the camp.

The principal charm of the place for Mr. Nixon, Zie-

gler has told reporters, is its privacy and the President intends to keep it that way.

Marine and Navy personnel stationed at the camp have mixed feelings about their duties. It is a pleasant enough in the summer—two young Marines narrowly escaped court-martial in the summer of 1970 for sneaking a swim in the President's pool—but one Marine said it is "bad duty on bad days in the winter."

The servicemen are comfortably housed, however, in separate rooms among the 10 cabins which surround the two large lodges at the camp.

The President's living name given it by Mr. Eisenhower is called "Aspen" the hower. President Roosevelt, who selected the site for the lodge and prepared the sketch for the building plan

of it, called it "Bear's Den." The dining lodge is called "Laurel" and all of the cabins are also named for trees.

Food at Camp David was described as "better than at the White House" by one staff aide who has eaten at both places. The Nixons thought enough of the camp food to give their chef Thanksgiving off and enjoy a turkey dinner prepared by naval stewards.

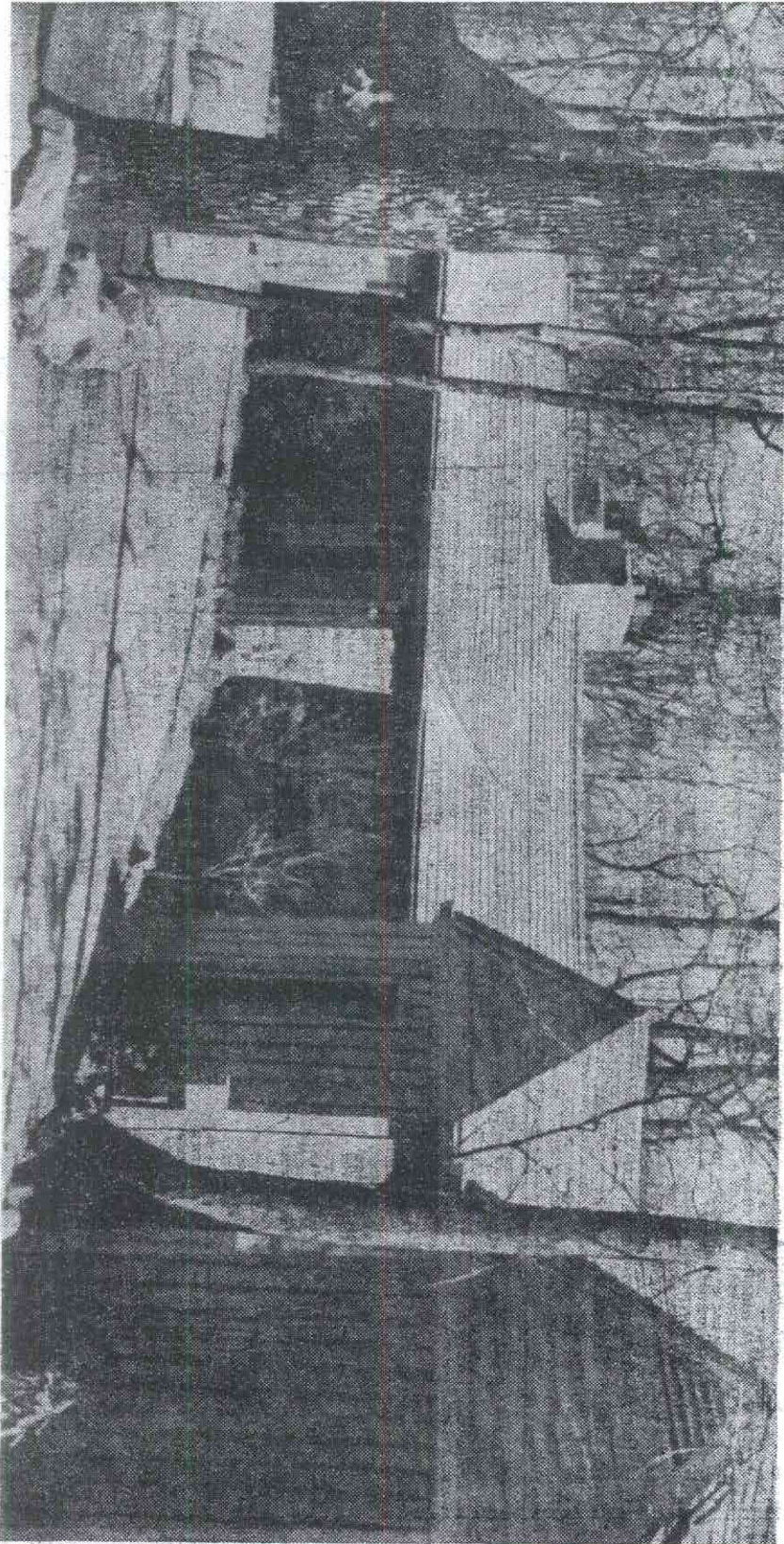
Until the Nixon era, the camp was almost entirely a meeting place for notables and a place to relax. Presidents Roosevelt and Johnson fished for recently stocked trout in nearby Owens Creek. President Johnson sometimes gave big parties there.

But for Richard Nixon, Camp David is a place to work and a place he finds congenial to his own pat-

terns of working. As the President put it in his Camp David speech of Nov. 27:

"I developed that pattern

early in the administration and am going to follow it even more during the next four years."



President Nixon's living lodge at his camp David retreat is called "Aspen," the name originally given it by President Eisenhower.

Associated Press

Nixon's fresh start

President Nixon is surely right in reading the election returns as a demand from the voters for "change that works." In pursuing this goal, the President must decide precisely what changes he himself believes in; he must reach agreement with the Democratic-controlled Congress; and he must make the executive branch responsive to policy changes once they have been adopted.

At present, Nixon seems to be concentrating on the last of these, which may seem like trying to put on the roof before the foundation is laid, but nevertheless makes a kind of sense. The President cannot develop policy in a vacuum. He needs knowledge of what is going on in the departments and agencies and awareness of the creative ideas that are percolating in society at large. During the past four years, Nixon has been getting too little of each.

This lack of communication is sometimes blamed on the "iron curtain" erected around the President by the White House staff. Nixon has indeed been ill served by assistants who have seemed to regard it as their highest duty to see to it that he is not bothered. There is a good deal in America to be bothered about.

Every White House staff, however, is the natural enemy of the departmental bureaucracies—seen usually as the unsympathetic filter between the departments and the President. If a President relies too much on his staff, he is bound to become more or less isolated—a complaint made against L.B.J. and Ike as well as Nixon.

A superstaffer for domestic affairs—a sort of "domestic Kissinger"—is not the answer. Domestic problems are too complex and varied—and too "popular"—to be dealt with through concentrated attacks on a few critical difficulties, as Kissinger has done in foreign affairs.

There really can be no substitute, in domestic matters at least, for an effective body of line officers heading the federal departments and agencies. Understanding this, Nixon planned at the beginning of his first term to govern largely through his cabinet. He wisely avoided the practice, initiated by Eisenhower and followed to a great extent by Kennedy and Johnson, of heading most departments with nonpolitical Establishment types. These men, worthy as they were in their own fields, often did badly at dealing with the political intricacies of Washington.

Nixon's first cabinet was made up mainly of experienced politicians and former government officials. Some, like Melvin Laird at the Pentagon, did well. But several of the former state officials and campaign lieutenants in the Nixon cabinet proved even less capable than the Establishment luminaries had been at coping with the federal bu-

reaucracy. Almost of necessity, the President fell back on his immediate staff.

Now he seems to be assembling a measurably stronger cabinet than the one he started with. The appointments of Elliot Richardson at Defense and Caspar Weinberger at Health, Education and Welfare are promising. In his second term, Nixon should be able to go back to his original intention of dealing with the departments directly through their appointed chiefs. This, in turn, should make possible the deep cut in the White House staff he has promised—and along the way the purging of those unscrupulous operators whose dimwitted "dirty tricks" besmirched his recent campaign.

Structural improvement alone will not generate more imaginative policies, nor win their approval by Congress. If the President is to bring about the domestic progress he correctly perceives the voters have asked for, he will have to dig deep into his own intellectual and spiritual resources, and mobilize all the political skills for which he is justly renowned.

Fixing the property tax

The property tax apparently is not so unpopular as many politicians and commentators have been assuming. In last month's elections, voters in California, Michigan, Colorado and Oregon all rejected by large majorities proposals to abolish or limit the property tax as a source of funds for schools or other local government purposes. The voters had the good sense to realize that revenues not collected from the property tax would have to be made up from other sources—a point that campaigners against the property tax do not always stress.

No matter how strongly the voters prefer it to increased sales or income taxes, however, the lo-

cal property tax may soon pass out of existence. It has been declared unconstitutional as a means for raising school revenues by courts in several states. One of these cases is now before the U.S. Supreme Court, with a decision expected by early spring.

There are actually three separate grievances against the property tax:

► First, it is not keyed to current income and can weigh heavily on low-income people who have put most of their savings into home ownership. But the total effect of all our various American tax systems is so strongly "progressive" that it is not a bad thing to have at least a few elements geared more to property than to income. The particular burden that the tax places on the poor and the elderly can be mitigated by a system of exemptions, as is already done in several states.

► Second, the property tax is subject to historic abuses, favoritism and corruption. This can be dealt with through such reforms as replacing political and part-time assessors with professionally trained civil servants.

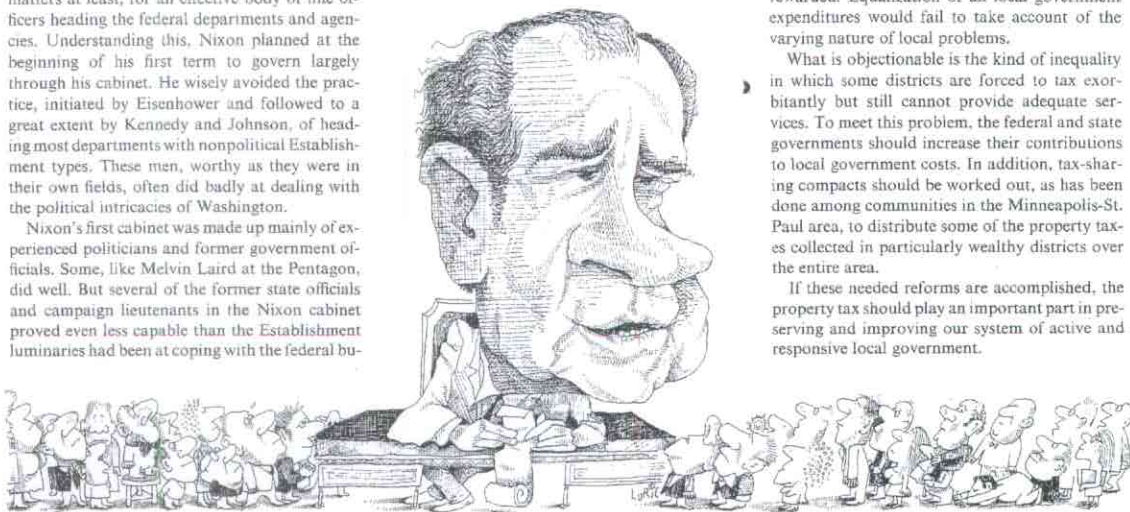
► Finally, there is the issue of financial inequality among a state's school districts, which is what is now chiefly bothering the courts. If the Supreme Court rules that such inequality is unconstitutional, the principle could logically be extended to cover other local government services, such as police protection, street maintenance and sanitation. The ultimate conclusion could be the end of financially independent local government in the U.S.

We suspect that some of the voters who elected to keep the property tax had this outcome at least vaguely in the back of their minds. Most Americans, it is becoming increasingly apparent, do not want a system in which all local units of government are required to be absolutely equal.

Up to a point, we think this voter sentiment is healthy. Local effort should be encouraged and rewarded. Equalization of all local government expenditures would fail to take account of the varying nature of local problems.

What is objectionable is the kind of inequality in which some districts are forced to tax exorbitantly but still cannot provide adequate services. To meet this problem, the federal and state governments should increase their contributions to local government costs. In addition, tax-sharing compacts should be worked out, as has been done among communities in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, to distribute some of the property taxes collected in particularly wealthy districts over the entire area.

If these needed reforms are accomplished, the property tax should play an important part in preserving and improving our system of active and responsive local government.



"Now that I've cut down the White House staff . . ."





Richard Nixon may be growing fonder of the presidential retreat at Camp David, but the White House press corps isn't. Not only are reporters kept out of the camp itself (they are allowed brief glimpses inside from one designated spot on the perimeter), but the facilities are minimal. Last week, when the President was making a lot of news by announcing cabinet shifts, the ten telephones inside the small press trailer were not enough. In a steady rain, reporters had to use phones set up on picnic tables outside, huddling under sheets of plastic. Press Secretary Ron Ziegler showed up (above, with the press trailer in the background) to inspect the correspondents, but he didn't invite anyone inside.

Life 11/18/72