

Nixon Fears Tapes' Embarrassments

By Jack Anderson
and Les Whitten

One reason Richard M. Nixon is fighting so hard to gain custody of the celebrated White House tape recordings, apparently, is to spare himself new embarrassments.

Sources privy to conversations inside the Oval Office while Nixon occupied it recall some political discussions that the former President might want to keep out of the history books.

There was blunt, bold talk, for example, of "one-man rule" and of Nixon's "right" to run the country, our sources recall. These discussions were usually initiated, say our sources, by Nixon's major domo, H. R. (Bob) Haldeman, who constantly sought to bolster the power of the White House.

As Haldeman rationalized it, the President was the only official elected by all the people. Haldeman felt this gave Nixon a mandate, particularly after Nixon's 1972 landslide victory, to set the nation's policies.

Haldeman urged Nixon to ride roughshod over Congress, contending its members individually represented limited constituencies. Sometimes Haldeman advocated power plays that violated the President's constitutional authority,

witnesses recall.

During these discussions, Nixon not only agreed but made impulsive, intemperate remarks, our sources report. The language might even give rise to charges that he sought dictatorial powers.

Our sources doubt, however, that Nixon intended to go as far as the taped conversations might indicate. They blame Haldeman who, they say, had an appetite for power.

But they heard enough of the conversations to understand why Nixon would like first crack at the tapes before they become part of the permanent history of his administration.

As Nixon acknowledged in a sworn deposition, he would like to arrange "for proper review of the tapes, which can only be undertaken by me and members of my family."

Only his wife, Pat, his daughters and himself, he declared, could make "the delicate judgments with regard to what is private and what is personal and what is political and what is embarrassing, what is national security."

Footnote: In fairness, the record should show that we are a party to the litigation over the White House tapes and that our attorney, William Dobrovir, conducted the deposition.

The controversial taping sys-

tem was purchased and installed at the taxpayers' expense. The conversations that were recorded, we believe, should belong to the taxpayers. For Nixon carried on the people's business, not his own, in the Oval Office.

We also contend that Nixon cannot be trusted to screen the conversations. We need only cite the White House transcripts he released on April 29, 1974—the nation discovered later that they had been doctored and distorted.

Sikes Story—Last April, we exposed the cozy relationship between Rep. Robert L. F. Sikes (D-Fla.) and Fairchild Industries. We told how Sikes, a Fairchild stockholder, used his influence as a member of the House military appropriations subcommittee to help Fairchild land a \$138 million aircraft deal.

In Washington, Sikes championed the A-10 airplane, which Fairchild manufactures. In Crestview, Fla., Fairchild championed the Robert L. F. Sikes Memorial Library.

Our report was followed by other news stories about Sikes' manipulations. Common Cause called upon Sikes to resign his committee post for alleged conflicts of interest involving, among other things, his ownership of Fairchild stock.

Sikes, accustomed to having his own way, grudgingly sold his Fairchild holdings but blasted Common Cause for maligning him.

There is more, meanwhile, to the library story. As we reported in April, Fairchild put up \$25,000 to help build the new library. Fairchild's president, Edward G. Uhl, took charge of the project as president of the Robert L. F. Sikes Library Association. And the company's chief press agent, Walter Rossbach, volunteered to help promote the library.

Now we have learned that Uhl has wangled \$21,500 in library contributions from eight major aircraft corporations. At least two of the contributors, Lear Siegler of Santa Monica, Calif., and United Technology of Hartford, Conn., said that they had been awarded defense contracts connected with the A-10.

None of the eight corporations has headquarters in or near Florida. All denied that their eagerness to immortalize Sikes in brick and mortar had anything to do with his influence on defense contracts.

Uhl told us that the contributors "have substantial business at (Florida's) Eglin Air Force Base or in the immediate area." A spokesman for Sikes had no comment.

© 1975, United Feature Syndicate, Inc.