

Ziegler Scores Press Articles On Nixon Estate as 'Malicious'

By JOHN HERBERS

Special to The New York Times

SAN CLEMENTE, Calif., July 3 — President Nixon's press secretary, Ronald L. Ziegler, angrily denounced today as "malicious, ill-founded and scurrilous," newspaper articles that he said suggested wrongdoing in the purchase of the Nixon estate here.

Asked if his views were shared by the President, Mr. Ziegler said, "absolutely," and added:

"I would say the President is appalled by the consistent effort, the malicious — do not know that libelous is the word in connection with the President — but I would say by the consistent effort to suggest any wrongdoing with the purchase of this property."

"In this period I assume there will continue to be malicious type accusations that will appear in various places," Mr. Ziegler continued.

"Statements that suggest any use of campaign funds, statements which suggest any impropriety are malicious, ill-founded and scurrilous in nature and are categorically and flatly untrue."

First Indication

This was the first official indication of President Nixon's personal feelings about the proliferation of charges of wrongdoing leveled against the Nixon Presidency in recent weeks. Mr. Ziegler left the implication that in the midst of the Watergate disclosures, the President feels his enemies are taking advantage of the situation to destroy him.

"Apparently there are those who want to suggest wrongdoing on the part of the President," Mr. Ziegler said. "They have no basis whatever to do so."

He would not be more specific.

What angered Mr. Ziegler was an article on page one of The Los Angeles Times this morning saying that the special Watergate prosecutor, Archibald Cox, had opened a preliminary inquiry into the purchase of and improvements on the home and grounds that Mr. Nixon acquired shortly after he entered the White House in 1969.

He said he had been told, by Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr., who had talked by telephone to Attorney General Elliott L. Richardson, that Mr. Cox, in Washington, had issued a statement denying the story. This raised the question of whether the Cox statement might have been the result of White House pressure. General Haig is Mr. Nixon's chief of staff, who has taken over most of the duties of H. R. Haldeman.

Mr. Ziegler said he did not know who had called whom on the matter.

actions were and we have stated clearly what the transactions were."

The May 28 statement did not provide the name of the investment company that had purchased the land, or the names of its officers. The White House has refused to supply that information, saying it would have to come from Mr. Abplanalp, who has declined to provide it.

The statement did not list the improvements made on the Nixon property at Government expense. In response to questions on May 29, the White House office listed improvements of less than \$40,000. After news reports indicated the improvements were considerably more, the General Services Administration, after a long period of refusing to produce any details, under White House orders, reported that the improvement services totaled more than \$700,000 and released all records. The G.S.A. said everything had been done for security reasons as ordered by the Secret Service, even to landscaping.

Indignation Endures

Mr. Ziegler, reminded of this and the fact that the disclosures were made only under persistent questioning for information, did not alter his indignation about the articles that have been appearing, and consequently worrying, the White House since President Nixon arrived here on June 22.

"We will simply stand on the material that has been provided as precise and accurate," Mr. Ziegler said.

The Santa Ana Register, in an article published yesterday said that the California Board of Equalization was investigating the tax assessment on the Nixon property. The paper quoted an official as saying that in 1970, Orange County assessed the property, for which Mr. Nixon had paid more than \$1.4-million, at a slightly more than \$1-million, despite the improvements that had been made by both the Government and Mr. Nixon. By 1972, the paper said, the assessed valuation had been raised by \$206,000.

Most property in California is assessed at less than its market value. In Orange County this is reported to be about 90 per cent of market value.

Mr. Ziegler said, "we have nothing to do with tax assessments." He said he knew of no efforts by anyone in the White House to achieve a lower tax for the President.

Decision Is Denied

WASHINGTON, July 3 (AP)

—The Watergate prosecutor's office acknowledged today that it was collecting news reports about President Nixon's homes in California and Florida but denied that any consideration was being given to opening a formal investigation.

A spokesman said that Mr. Cox had asked his staff to collect the news reports after he had received several inquiries about whether he would investigate the purchases by the President of his homes at Key Biscayne, Fla., and San Clemente.

Beyond that, the spokesman said, Mr. Cox is standing by his statement at a news conference on June 18 that "I haven't decided anything on that one way or the other."

Some details on the purchase of the Nixon property here were disclosed in a statement by the White House May 25. Mr. Nixon borrowed \$625,000 from a friend, Robert M. Abplanalp, to help pay for the purchase of the Spanish-style home and some 29 acres. The statement said that Abplanalp later created an investment company that bought most of the land, leaving Mr. Nixon with about five acres and the house.

"We have provided more details than ever before," Mr. Ziegler said today. "We have cited precisely what the trans-