

New House Action On Nixon's Homes

Washington

The House Government Operations Committee voted yesterday to use subpoena powers if necessary to obtain records of government spending to improve President Nixon's homes in California and Florida.

The subpoena resolution was the first since the committee was formed in 1946, according to Representative Chet Holifield (Dem-Calif.), the committee chairman.

The resolution asked for records on all federally-financed improvements on private property owned, leased, occupied or used by Presidents beginning with Harry S. Truman.

TARGETS

The subpoenas can be issued to the General Services Administration, various military branches, the Secret Service and the Departments of Transportation and Interior, all named by Representative Jack Brooks (Dem-Tex.) as having made expenditures at presidential homes.

Brooks had asked for the subpoena power after investigators of the Government Activities Subcommittee, of which he is chairman, had been unable to see documents held by the GSA. Brooks said his committee was shut off from the records "after a meeting at the White House on Sunday between Mr. (Arthur F.) Sampson (GSA Administrator), Ronald Ziegler, Leonard Garment and Jack Warner of the Secret Service."

The subpoena power was voted despite a letter from Bryce N. Harlow, a presidential counselor, which assured the committee members that information would be furnished to the committee voluntarily within a few

days. If the documents are available Monday, the subpoenas will not be used. Brooks said.

ISSUE

The question of federal spending to improve Mr. Nixon's properties at San Clemente and at Key Biscayne, Fla., has become a major issue in the last two months.

Initially, the White House sought to minimize the costs incurred, but in June the GSA issued statements showing a total of \$1.8 million between the two locations.

Copies of the files on the spending at the San Clemente residence have now come into possession of the New York Times.

The records show that Herbert H. Kalmbach, the attorney who represented Mr. Nixon in the purchase of the estate at San Clemente, played a controlling role as plans were made for its renovation.

SECURITY

The records also show that \$703,000 in public funds was spent there.

While the GSA's previous disclosures of the spending have claimed that most of it was in the name of presidential security, the invoices that the committee will receive under its subpoena show that many thousands of dollars went for purposes not related to security.

One of the first jobs done was a topographical survey ordered by Kalmbach in April, 1969. This was at least two weeks before the Nixon purchase was announced.

JOB

The billing for this survey shows that fees were charged — at \$15 hour — for the surveyors to meet with Kalmbach, city officials in San Clemente, Lawrence M. Higby, assistant to Mr. Nixon,

Secret Service agents and others.

The South Coast Engineering Service in San Clemente was paid by the federal government for five different jobs, according to the invoices. These covered work that began in April, 1969, almost three months before Mr. Nixon bought the property.

The early bills were sent to Kalmbach's law office in Newport Beach, Calif., said William Ayer, a partner in the company. The bills were paid by the GSA.

One of the bills covered a structural assessment of the house. It and the grounds had been allowed to deteriorate under the previous ownership, for it was unoccupied for much of the time, Ayer said.

However, one bill was paid by Mr. Nixon. This covered a survey of the land around the house, Ayer said.

OVERSEER

Kalmbach also called in an overseer from Newport Beach, Ayer said, identifying him as Larry D. Lynch, a landscape architect. Lynch's several letters to GSA officials are in the files that the House committee will receive. On one occasion, Lynch instructed GSA employees which fertilizer to buy and where to get it; on another, he told them to get 1625 flower bulbs and where to get them.

Lynch said "the major thrust of the work was toward security purposes, or to repair damage done to the grounds in burying cables and the like." But Lynch would not say that all the landscaping, which cost more than \$100,000, was tied to those purposes.

Kalmbach's involvement with the people working on the Nixon property turns up frequently in the file of invoices. One notes that a new

exhaust fan was placed in the President's fireplace "per Mr. Kalmbach." The cost was \$388.78.

DRIVEWAYS

In addition to Kalmbach's involvement in directing the work, the invoices also make clear the tenuous relationship of some of the work to the considerations of Presidential security. For example, the driveways seem to be in constant need of repair, with frequent paving contracts turning up among the invoices.

For another example, it cost \$6750 to rebuild one gazebo and \$23,650 to rebuild others. A redwood fence along the slope above the beach cost \$11,561. A six-inch water line to permit installation of a fire hydrant cost \$6260.

A new beach cabana and a crossing over the railroad tracks with "a waiting station, stairs and handrailing" was contracted for \$6400, but another \$7000 was added for increased work that included a redwood platform to hold a shower at the cabana.

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