

House Panel Questions Propriety of U.S. Spending

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Oct. 14 — Evidence unearthed by a Congressional inquiry into the use of Government funds at President Nixon's estates in Florida and California has raised "serious questions of propriety," according to the chairman of the House subcommittee conducting the investigation.

Representative Jack Brooks, chairman of the House Government Activities subcommittee, said following the first week of hearings on the use of Government funds for the President's homes at San Clemente and Key Biscayne that he would seek legislation to block the abuse of what he considers virtually unregulated access by Presidents to public funds for their private residences.

Mr. Brooks, a Texas Democrat, said the record indicated that part of the money ostensibly used to provide "security" for the President at his residences had actually added to the opulence of Mr. Nixon's properties without serving any discernible security functions.

The first three days of hearings produced several startling disclosures that private citizens representing Mr. Nixon had made purchases for the President's homes and then sent the bills to the Government for payment.

The purchases were charged to the Secret Service and the General Services Administration. Mr. Brooks contended in an interview that neither of these agencies had had "the guts" to resist pressures by Mr. Nixon's representatives.

Mr. Brooks asserted, however, that the responsibility for any misuses of laws designed to protect the President must be fixed on the President himself, not his subordinates.

The hearings resume tomorrow with testimony from the Department of Defense. More than half of the \$10.2-million already disclosed as having been spent by the Federal Government in improving, maintaining and operating the President's private homes and ad-

joining areas was disbursed by the Defense Department.

Defense Department officials have already informed the committees staff that operating costs of another residential retreat — the Government-owned Camp David in the Catoctin Mountains of Maryland — have more than quadrupled since Mr. Nixon took office.

In 1968, the last year of President Johnson's Administration, the cost of maintaining and operating Camp David was \$147,000, according to the committee's information. In 1973, the United States Navy, which maintains Camp David, was spending \$640,000 to keep the mountaintop retreat in shape for Mr. Nixon's excursions from the White House — when the President was not at his Key Biscayne or San Clemente homes or at the Bahamas home of a millionaire friend, Robert Abplanalp.

\$40,000 for Landscaping

Thus far Democrats on the subcommittees have been challenging witnesses from the Secret Service and the General Services Administration, the Government's housekeeping agency, about a series of purchases and contracts charged to the Federal Government but allegedly unrelated to security or any other requirement of state other than the President's comfort.

One example that drew the interest of the subcommittee last week was the enlargement of the windows in the President's den in his San Clemente home. After the windows were enlarged, bulletproof glass was inserted. G.S.A. officials said that the windows had been widened for "security" reasons. However, they conceded that they had no specific request from the Secret Service to do so.

The widening of the windows did improve the view of the Pacific Ocean from the President's desk, according to reports from witnesses at San Clemente.

The Democrats on the subcommittee also had questions about bills first sent to Herbert W. Kalmbach, then the President's personal lawyer, for work that he had ordered and then

had rebilled to the G.S.A. for payment. They also wanted to know about suggestions from persons such as John D. Ehrlichman, former chief domestic counselor to the President, for continuing projects for the President's home such as a landscaping maintenance contract of about \$40,000 a year.

Representative John C. Culver, Democrat of Iowa, frequently expressed outrage during the hearings. He commented that "we see a disturbing pattern suggesting that many items were listed as security related [in the accounting of Government funds spent at the two homes] that were a result of pressure on the Secret Service."

Administrative witnesses, particularly Arthur F. Sampson, Administrator of the G.S.A., maintained that the public money spent on the San Clemente and Key Biscayne homes had detracted from their value.

Mr. Brooks replied, "Any time you want to desecrate my property with all that money you just come on down to Texas and do it."

Mr. Brooks declared that the hearings had indicated the need for a number of changes in the way security and support services were conducted at the private residences of Presidents. He contended that such changes as the following were needed:

A prohibition on outside private parties such as Mr. Kalmbach, or Hal Lynch, President Nixon's personal architect, from placing orders in the name of the President and then sending the bill to the Government.

Adoption by the Secret Service and the General Services Administration of "orderly operating and accounting procedures as soon as possible."

A requirement that the Secret Service, which can now

call on any other Government agency to assist in its task of protecting the President and his family, pay for its own operations and not "hide" its expenditures in the budgets of other Federal agencies.

A requirement that the President "show more responsibility" in his demands on Government agencies and public funds.

Mr. Brooks said that the President should not be allowed to make what he called unreasonably expensive demands such as requiring the Secret Service and the General Services Administration to have the San Clemente residence ready for his visit two weeks after he bought it.

Protection Not Questioned

An overriding question to Mr. Brooks and other committee members was whether Mr. Nixon, or any President, should have unlimited access to the public purse for establishing and securing private vacation retreats and working homes. Nobody disputed the need to provide the President and his family with the most thorough protection.

"But we already provide him with a very fine home in the White House," Mr. Brooks said. "He can use Camp David, he can use any military installation in the country. The Government was just left an estate down in Palm Beach by Mrs. Merriweather Post that would make Mr. Bebe Rebozo look like a penny ante crap shooter. He can use that any time he wants."

"Mr. Nixon is against welfare bums. I don't see why we should give a million dollars in welfare so he can refurbish his palaces in California and Florida. Especially since he doesn't

on Nixon Homes

think we have enough money to help poor people with low-income housing programs, school milk programs for the children, and other programs for the poor. Why, down my way at Galveston he is closing the Public Health hospital."

Republicans at the partisan hearings presented evidence indicating that public funds had been spent on the private residences of past Presidents and that the spending on San Clemente and Key Biscayne was not unusual.

Public Property

Representative John Buchanan Jr. of Alabama, the ranking Republican, said that the information given to him showed that \$5.2-million had been spent to support President Johnson's trips to his Texas ranch. However, the bulk of this sum was expended on the Federal building in Austin, Tex., 60 miles from the LBJ Ranch, and the Lyndon B. Johnson Library, both of them public property then and now.

The total covered a 10-year period from 1964 to 1973, whereas the spending on Mr. Nixon's properties covered the five years since his election.

But Mr. Buchanan and other Republicans using a report released last week by the Federal housekeeping agency, were able to demonstrate that public funds had indeed been used for nonsecurity purposes such as flower beds and an ice chest at the LBJ Ranch. The sums involved were much smaller than those spent on the Nixon properties — one Republican questioned an expenditure of \$4.90 for hand towels in the ladies room at the press house on the ranch — but the principle was the same.

Although Mr. Buchanan's questions were directed at the

spending of past presidents rather than on Government spending on Key Biscayne and San Clemente, he indicated that changes were needed.

"We need tighter procedures," Mr. Buchanan said during a break in the hearings. "We need to have requests for work on private property put in writing and to have legal authority cited for such expenditure. We also need to examine the question of how many private residences of a President the Government should support.

"The Government created this situation by telling the Secret Service and the G.S.A. that 'you shall assist in the protection of the President.' Congress will have to change this situation."