

Was President Underpaid?

By Ron Kessler

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Along with his salary from the White House, President Richard M. Nixon is listed in his 1969 federal income tax return as having been paid \$10.50 by "G. Schlatter, Beverly Hills, Calif."

A call to Schlatter yesterday elicited the information that until last year, he was the producer of the television show "Laugh-in."

When told he had been listed in the President's tax returns as having been one of Mr. Nixon's employers, Schlatter was incredulous.

"You're putting me on," he said. "Who are you?"

When Schlatter was told the returns show he paid Mr. Nixon \$10.50, Schlatter began laughing uncontrollably.

While denying he paid Mr. Nixon anything, Schlatter said, "Personally, I think he was overpaid."

"Are you sure you're from The Washington Post? What's your telephone number?" Schlatter said.

Schlatter eventually theorized that the payment might have been for Mr. Nixon's appearance on "Laugh-in." Mr.

Nixon's role, Schlatter said, was to say, "Sock it to me?"

Schlatter said Mr. Nixon appeared in 1968, and the show was run again in 1969. He said the payment was probably for the re-run.

Schlatter said the correct payment for such a re-run under union contract was \$105.

"First of all," he said, "I'm in trouble because I don't want to be listed as contributing to this man. Second, I'm in trouble with AFTRA (American Federation of Television and Radio Artists), because evidently we paid him below scale regardless of the quality of the performance."

Schlatter denied he paid Mr. Nixon only \$10.50. "I have never paid less than scale. I deny I ever paid less than scale," he said.

"It's another case of sloppy book-keeping," Schlatter said.

Asked about the claimed discrepancy yesterday, a representative of the President said the \$10.50 figure had been listed on the W-2 form submitted by Schlatter.

"I'm not going to testify," Schlatter said. "I'm going to the Bahamas."