

Nixon Home Value Left to County

ANAHAIM, Calif., Aug. 4 (AP)—State officials have dumped the problem of possible underassessment of President Nixon's San Clemente home into the laps of Orange County authorities.

John Lynch, a 15-year veteran of the state Board of Equalization, says that any investigation into the property tax assessment of the President's seaside villa would have to be conducted by the county, not the state.

The purchase price and improvements made by the General Services Administration for security and other improvements made by Mr. Nixon total \$2.35 million. The current assessment is \$1.37 million.

Citing precedents going back to 1880, Lynch said the state board is forbidden to dabble in local affairs.

He said, however, that he expects the state board to pass a resolution Sept. 17 asking Orange County officials to conduct an investigation to clear up the controversy.

County officials said they were unsure how they would deal with the board's request for an investigation.

Last week, William M. Bennett, chairman of the state board, asked the board to investigate the alleged underassessment of Mr. Nixon's home, but the board rejected his request by a 4-to-1 vote.

County Assessor Jack Vallarga said Friday that the Nixon home is the highest valued single-family residence in Orange County, exceeding the next highest home's valuation by more than \$400,000.

The 24.6-acre property was assessed with its highest and best use classified as a subdivision because of the size of the unoccupied lands, Vallarga explained.

There have been allegations that the President's property has been under assessed in the past because the assessor's office did not take into account the Secret Service-authorized improvements on the property. Vallarga has denied the report.