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A Rank Weed In the Garden

THERE IS A SOLID CASE to be made against impeaching Richard Nixon on the various flimsy pretexts now being advanced, but any conservative who thinks that by defending the President he is also somehow defending the cause of conservatism simply hasn't studied the recent record of this man and his Administration. By way of illustration, I give you S.2686.

Of all the outrages currently being perpetrated on the American people, in their name and with their money, one of the worst is the "legal services" boondoggle. This rank weed in the garden of government grew up, like so many others, during the Johnson Administration, when it occurred to some bright liberal that poor people ought to have free lawyers. Today there are some 2500 hot-eyed attorneys on the OEO payroll, scattered in nearly 900 offices around the country, at salaries up to \$25,000 apiece.



Now legislation (S.2686) has been introduced to transfer this program from OEO to a new semi-private corporation, which will be subsidized by public funds but free from all operational accountability to the public as represented by their duly-elected officials. This monstrosity is called the Nelson - Javits Bill, and I invite conservatives to observe how the Nixon team has reacted to it.

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UNDERSTANDABLY, the lobbyists for this bill don't want it seriously discussed before the Senate vote. It was snapped out to the floor in December by the Labor & Public Welfare Committee without any hearings whatever, and a desperate attempt was made to smother all discussion in the Senate itself.

The first cloture petition was filed before the case against the bill had so much as been stated on the Senate floor. This was too much even for some of its backers; cloture was defeated, 36 to 60.

Then Mr. Nixon's most influential contact with Capitol Hill, Mel Laird, got to work — on behalf of cloture! But cloture still failed.

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NOW THE BILL is scheduled to come up for action on January 28th. When it does, the Senate will have before it numerous amendments offered by opponents of the bill. Better yet, there will be a motion to refer this barrel of left-legal pork to the gimlet-eyed Judiciary Committee for the hearing and drastic overhaul it so badly needs. There will also be a chance to pass a wholly different bill for legal services to the poor (S.1990), submitted by Senators Brock and Helms, that is infinitely better than anything that could possibly be made out of the Nelson - Javits monstrosity.

Conservatives are going to be watching where Mr. Nixon ends up on this one. Despite Laird's recent performance, there are soothing hints that the White House isn't really all that happy about S.2686. Perhaps, but actions notoriously outshout words. If Nixon continues to back, via Laird, the Nelson-Javits Bill, or fails to veto it, he is going to lose plenty of conservative supporters for good.

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