

Annenberg Leaving London With Critics Mellowed

By ALVIN SHUSTER
Special to The New York Times

LONDON, Oct. 14—After two dozen parties and a couple of false starts, and after contributions of more than \$1-million to British organizations, Walter H. Annenberg announced definite plans to give up his post as United States Ambassador to Britain.

The 66-year-old Philadelphian, appointed five and a half years ago by his close friend, Richard M. Nixon, said he would go home on Oct. 30 although no successor has been named. He will leave as a deep admirer of all things British but worried about the economic plight that threatens the way of life here.

He also leaves with a British press much kinder than when he arrived, and, in many ways, with a better image. It has been an uphill climb, starting from widespread questioning in London and Washington over whether he was the right man to represent the United States in Britain.

"Ambassadors are not all that important any more, and we all stopped talking about Annenberg after a while," said a British minister who dealt closely with him. "It turned out that he was a good friend of this country and interested in good Anglo-American relations. And he had the ear of Nixon all those years."

Money, Goodwill, Silence

A combination of money, goodwill and silence contributed to Mr. Annenberg's recovery after his shaky start. He was regarded as too inexperienced in foreign affairs — as a publisher and television owner who got the job because of heavy contributions to Republican causes, a big-business figure who lacked the eloquence the British admire.

All that is no longer a topic of conversation. Many still remember his widely publicized meeting with Queen Elizabeth II, when he presented his credentials, but the Ambassador laughs about it now and speakers introducing him at dinners jest about the incident.

The derision arose because, at the ceremony, seen by millions as part of the British television program on the royal family, Mr. Annenberg used what the British press called "preposterous circumlocutions." Asked by the Queen whether he was living in the embassy, he replied that he was in the residence, subject to "some of the discomfort as a result of the need for elements of refurbishment and rehabilitation."

At a recent farewell dinner Sir Alec Douglas Home, a former Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, attended



Karsh, Ottawa

Walter H. Annenberg

to the incident by saying that "there was a time when we thought your saddle had slipped," but "you ran out a good, decisive winner in the end."

Mr. Annenberg replied that the advice to his successor would be to say only "Yes, ma'am," if the Queen asked the new envoy whether he was comfortable.

'Journalistic Attacks'

At a farewell luncheon with American reporters today, Mr. Annenberg talked of the "difficulties thrust on me by journalistic attacks" at the outset, but said they merely provided an "incentive for a better performance." He said that he admired the British for their graciousness and their dignity and that he would always be grateful to Mr. Nixon for

"giving me the greatest honor in my life."

Mr. Annenberg kept his public speeches to a minimum, relied heavily on his embassy staff for advice and found a variety of causes in need. Through his charitable and educational trusts in the United States, he contributed to the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden; the British Museum, St. Paul's Cathedral and several school and university funds.

He commissioned a picture book on Westminster Abbey and a sculpture of Harold Macmillan, the former Prime Minister, for Eton, and contributed toward a Rousseau for the National Gallery. His trust also contributed \$100,000 for a swimming pool at the Prime Minister's country residence at Chequers.

Moreover, when part of his famous art collection went on exhibit at the Tate Gallery, Mr. Annenberg paid for the catalogue and all the insurance so that the admission could be free. The paintings, now on the walls of the envoy's residence on 12 acres in Regent's Park, will be flown to his home in Palm Springs, Calif.

His Own Special Style

Mr. Annenberg, publisher of TV Guide, Seventeen Magazine, and The Daily Racing Form, and former publisher of The Philadelphia Inquirer and Daily News, said he had spent about \$250,000 a year on maintaining the house and entertaining. He explained that part of that was recovered in tax write-offs, under long-standing provisions, and added that the house could probably be operated on less.

"Someone else might be

able to run it for about \$100,000 or \$125,000 a year," he said today. "A career diplomat without independent wealth could fill this job if he received some special help from the Government. I operated with a style—not everyone would like."

The Ambassador, who remains a close friend of Mr. Nixon, is clearly bitter about the way the American press treated the former President. "Sections of the press were more concerned with a display of power rather than responsibility," Mr. Annenberg asserted.

He said that Mr. Nixon and Dean Rusk, former Secretary of State, were advising him now on one of his next projects—a school of international communications to be established in New York or Washington. He expressed the hope that Mr. Nixon could run a seminar on international affairs at the school in a year or two.

Apart from Britain's more serious problems, Mr. Annenberg said he foresaw a "general watering down" of the way of life for the wealthy here, noting that people "don't want to be part of a domestic staff anymore." But, he added, those without means should have a "better way of life, so it's all to the good."

When Mr. Annenberg departs he will also leave behind a number of favorite phrases, often repeated in staff meetings and duly recorded by some in the embassy. Among them: "Behind every successful man is a woman telling him that he's wrong;" "When you make a sale, run."