

# Data on San Clemente Suppressed

By Jack Anderson

The taxpayers were never supposed to find out how their money was squandered on President Nixon's San Clemente estate. When we started to investigate last year, government officials played keep-away with the facts.

The story of the cover-up is told in documents that have now fallen into our hands. The documents, though bearing the low classification "For Official Use Only," were treated as state secrets.

They should have been open to the public under the Freedom of Information Act. But when we sought them, the building supervisor at San Clemente, Carl Davis, suggested that "if so desired these files could be accidentally misplaced."

I assigned my associate Brit Hume in September, 1972, to investigate the San Clemente renovations. Brit's inquiries touched off an alarm inside the General Service Administration, which supervised the project.

The documents show that Brit questioned the construction engineer, William Robinson, on Sept. 28, 1972. "Mr. Hume identified himself as being from Jack Anderson's office," reports a classified memo, "and was aware that Bill Robinson was the contracting officer at the Western White House, including the residence.

"It was apparent from the con-

versation that Mr. Hume was aware of all the contracts, scope of work, dollar amounts and contract numbers for all of the work which was done by Bill... Mr. Hume said it appeared there was something fishy going on and said he would like to see the records. Bill told him he no longer had any records..."

Instead of producing the records, however, GSA investigated how we learned about the misuse of money at San Clemente. There were urgent calls between San Clemente and Washington. E. W. Baughman, the regional director in charge of public buildings, reported:

"I... received a call from Rick Fanske who had been in contact with Larry Roush and Frank Price (all GSA officials), and they wanted me to ascertain before the close of business who leaked the information to Hume, or how he obtained it."

As part of the cover-up, the work done for the President at San Clemente was known by the secret code name, "Project Sunrise." Recounted Baughman in his classified memo: "I called a quick meeting of those people who were knowledgeable on Operation Sunrise..."

"I also at this time contacted Ernest Garbarino, building manager, Western White House Field Office, and asked him to contact the City Building Department to determine what information they had available on the Western White House con-

struction, and if this information was available to the public.

"Ernie called back and reported that Mr. Carl Davis, who is in charge of the building department at San Clemente, advised the files... are available to the public... These files also carry the code name, 'Project Sunrise.' Mr. Davis indicated to Ernie that if so desired these files could be accidentally misplaced."

Baughman, meanwhile, ducked a telephone call from Brit. "The call was transferred to me, and he was told I was not in," reported Baughman.

He added: "I informed the people having knowledge of Project Sunrise if they were contacted by Mr. Hume or any other news media, they are not to respond to questions, and abruptly and promptly refer such calls to the White House Press Office."

Despite the effort to obstruct our investigation, we were able to publish the first report on Oct. 3, 1972, that the President was renovating his old Spanish villa in San Clemente, in part, with public funds. We cited a \$13,500 bill that the taxpayers paid to buy the Nixons a new heating system.

The Secret Service bravely took the blame for the expenditure and offered us this imaginative explanation. "The heating system," said a spokesman, "was changed as a result of our suggestion that it be changed.

We considered the former system to be in such condition that it was a threat to the President's security."

Yet the suppressed documents in our possession show that the President's architect, Harold Lynch, wrote White House aide John Ehrlichman on June 18, 1969, listing the expected expenses that should be charged to the President personally. One item was \$11,807 for a system "to provide adequate heat for the residence."

There was also no mention of a new heating system in the original requests that the Secret Service made for government funds. Not until July 2, 1969, was the heating system added to the government expenses.

Noted John F. Galuardi, a GSA official, in a memo to the file: "The Secret Service had ruled out the proposal to provide gas fired forced hot air heating in the residence, and were requesting GSA to install electric heating. In a later conversation, it was indicated that baseboard electric heaters were preferred by the family."

The taxpayers picked up the final \$13,500 bill. The President, meanwhile, used the San Clemente estate as a write-off to help reduce his taxes. Despite a salary of \$200,000 a year, he paid a federal income tax of only \$792.81 in 1970 and \$873.03 in 1971.