

Items From a Columnist's Mailbag

By Jack Anderson
and Les Whitten

There has been nothing merry about our pre-Christmas mail. On one day alone, we counted 1,500 letters condemning and defending President Nixon. Most of our mail, however, has brought news tips and individual complaints. Here's a sampling:

Kevin Kennedy, Boston—"I read your column about President Nixon's emergency powers. Can't Congress revoke these powers?"

Answer—Over the years, Congress has passed 470 laws which grant the President dictatorial powers. All the President has to do is proclaim an emergency. What Congress giveth, of course, Congress can taketh away.

J. B., Atlanta—I have heard that singer Frank Sinatra channeled Mafia money into the Nixon-Agnew campaign last year."

Answer—We have been able to trace \$53,000 that Sinatra contributed to the Nixon-Agnew campaign. It was his own, not Mafia, money.

Maj. Gen. Harry Vaughn (USAR, ret.), the late President Truman's military aide, Arlington, Va.—"In the summer of 1946, I took Mrs. Vaughn and the children up (to the Camp David presidential retreat) for a week. There was a security detail of about 20 men

at that time. I understand it now numbers over 200. In 1946, when guests were there, a cook and several stewards were sent up to take care of them.

"We spent a rather tiresome week, and I recall the water in the pool was under 50 degrees. I killed a rattler and two copperheads by way of recreation. A week or so after I returned home, I received a bill from the Navy for \$140 for food. This, I would guess, was the last time in White House history that a presidential aide has paid for anything."

Answer—President Nixon has sunk \$2.4 million of the taxpayers' money in the Camp David retreat, more than was spent by the three previous Presidents combined. Among other improvements, Mr. Nixon built a fancy, heated, \$150,000 pool outside his cabin. The cold-water pool is now used by his security men. Presidential aides are still dunned, however, for meals at Camp David.

Frank Sturgis, member of the Watergate break-in crew, writing after a one-night stay at the Brunswick, Ga., city jail—"It was a small and very dirty place. The cell next to me on my left had two young girls, Karen, age 12, and Brenda, age 14, both white. On my right, in a cell were two young black boys, Mike, age 15, and Gary, age 16.

"Jack, with all my problems and me with a family, I just can't

see what is happening in this world of ours that puts children in a jail.

"That night I froze with my two inmate friends. We had a blanket, and we burned everything we could get our hands on, including the mattress. We had to stop because the hacks came and we had to stop the fire. At least we stayed warm for a little while. We didn't sleep all night because of the wind and cold.

"I still cannot get it out of my mind that these young people are suffering in a dirty, cold and windy jail, and no one cares what happens to them. They are just children who have been in that jail approximately 22 days."

Answer—We have confirmed your report. The jailer claimed the cells are usually heated, but the "heat must have been kicked off" the night you were there.

E. C., Washington, D.C.—"The Air Force has disassembled a Soviet SAM-6, captured by the Israelis. It contained an integrated circuit, stamped with the seal of the Texas Instrument Co. When the missile detects a heat source, the electronic guidance system switches from radar control to infra-red home, and then the missile swings around, if necessary, and overtakes the plane in the rear."

Answer—The missile you describe, with the Texas Instrument circuit, is found in the

NATO arsenal. It does not, according to our Air Force sources, resemble the Soviet SAM-6.

R. J., Jacksonville, Fla.—"The U.S. attorney here, John Briggs, said in a speech that your employees broke into the late Sen. Tom Dodd's files. What is the difference between that and the Watergate break-in, which you have condemned?"

Answer—Dodd's papers, which provided evidence he had violated federal laws, were removed from his files by his own employees, not mine. They later testified that I had counseled them not to rifle his files.

Harold Green, Chicago—"I have read conflicting reports about the senility of Mao Tse-tung."

Answer—Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger during his recent Peking visit found Mao, now approaching 80, to be mentally alert. Another visitor caught the old revolutionary in a reflective mood. Mao acknowledged that his health was failing and spoke of his "appointment with God."

Harold Johnson, New York City—"Administration spokesmen say that a 50 m.p.h. speed limit not only will save fuel but reduce accidents. Shouldn't automobile insurance rates go down?"

Answer—Don't count on it.

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