

Brass Hats Cling to Their GI Servants

By Jack Anderson

Congressmen are grumbling that the message of inflation and frugality is not getting through to our admirals, generals and a few administration high-livers.

Legislators who drop by to chat with the brass hats at cocktail time, for instance, soon find that the military toasts being raised to belt-tightening are really 90-proof hogwash on the rocks.

The congressmen see GI servants mixing the drinks, polishing the silver, hustling the canapes, mowing the lawn outside and chauffeuring the Pentagon panjandrums' wives home from their shopping.

With such pretty extravagance before their eyes, it is hard for the members to believe that the brass hats are being any more frugal with their multibillion-dollar budget.

Actually, the hundreds of recruits assigned to such menial jobs are costing the taxpayers at least \$5.4 million a year, even though Pentagon regulations bar the use of GIs as domestic servants for officers.

Lately, the House Appropriations Committee chairman, George Mahon (D-Tex.), who usually zips through military requests with the speed of a Polaris missile, has demanded to know why well-paid officers need GI servants.

In reply, former Army Secretary Robert Froehlke explained that he didn't want his chief of

staff rushing home at five o'clock to mow the lawn. Growled Mahon:

"Well, he could hire his own help like the rest of us."

At a recent party for 500—including then-Vice President Ford—the Marine Corps commandant, Gen. Robert Cushman, dragooned local leathernecks to wash dishes and serve liquor without pay. Two of them were minors, which would have gotten Cushman's license revoked if he were running a bar. "This may have occurred inadvertently," a spokesman explained lamely.

Like the other joint chiefs, Cushman is allotted five military servants for his personal convenience. At a GI salary of almost \$8,000 plus benefits, this means each chief can tap the taxpayers for \$40,000 a year for his house-cleaning and errands.

During interviews with the GI slaves, my reporter Howie Kurtz found them serving as baby-sitters, pet-walkers, cookie-bakers for a general's children, boot-polishers, car-waxers and bathroom-floor-scrubbers.

When his general wants to summon him, one Air Force steward complained, he rings a bell. "The name should be changed from aide to maid," the steward grumbled. Although they are supposed to get extra pay for serving at parties, most don't. And some brass hats lend their stewards around as if they were portable appliances.

Until last year, these GI val-

ets, cabin boys and grocery shoppers were sent to a training school to pursue such topics as The Correct Waitress, Ice Carving Made Easy, Use of Domestic Appliances, and The Army Wife. Now they learn on the job.

In a still-confidential General Accounting Office report, 675 enlisted men were found serving in the pantries and pool rooms of the military mighty. Countless others also serve, it is believed, but have gone undetected.

The ethnic make-up of the GI servants smacks of racism. Two-thirds of the Marine servants are black, the GAO found. And 98 per cent of the Navy's stewards are Filipinos.

The military, however, is simply following the royal example of the old Nixon White House, which seemed to have delusions that the "Mansion of the People" was really Versailles or the Imperial Palace.

A total of 91 Navy stewards were assigned to the White House, the GAO discovered, almost all Filipinos. Another 65 Navy aides were forced to chauffeur staffers. Nine military "housemaids" cleaned up the cigarette butts and empty glasses in the cabins at Camp David. Others did menial tasks for the President at San Clemente and Key Biscayne.

When Mr. Nixon flew to the California White House, for example, 15 or 20 stewards were rushed out to be at his beck and call. Vice President Spiro Agnew, before he was forced out of

office, had two houseboys assigned to him.

Aboard the presidential yacht Sequoia, Navy aides served as janitors and waiters for partying staffers. During 1972, one steward told us, former Commerce Secretary Maurice H. Stans used the yacht and its Navy crew to entertain GOP campaign contributors.

Other stewards wash dishes in the White House staff mess. Several times a week, they must also serve without pay as butlers at private parties in the homes of White House officials.

Sen. William Proxmire (D-Wis.), outraged by such reports, brought the GAO in to look into White House misuse of GIs. The GAO privately informed Proxmire that they were stonewalled.

"We have been unable to obtain permission from the White House to examine the records or... to interview the personnel assigned to the staff mess," Proxmire was told.

Nevertheless, the GAO watchdogs did find at least \$1 million was being spent by the White House to pay its GI servants. Some, the GAO reported, were working 60 hours a week.

Footnote: President Ford is unafflicted with an Arabian potentate complex, and already there are signs that fewer GI servants will be at the White House. Meanwhile, despite the new Pentagon regulations, most generals and admirals are still using their orderlies as household servants.