

# Imperial Retirement

General Services Administrator Arthur Sampson has juggled the figures a bit in attempting to justify the Ford Administration's request for \$850,000 to support former President Nixon through the end of the fiscal year, but the proposal still adds up to a widely extravagant and uncalled-for expenditure of public funds. As we have noted before, there is a certain sum to which the former President is entitled by law—for his pension, his office staff and for transition expenses—but Mr. Ford has asked Congress to appropriate a quarter of a million dollars over and above what is required by law to ease the former President's change in status following his forced resignation.

Originally, the Administration's request included \$40,000 for travel for the Nixon family through next June and an extraordinary \$100,000 for "miscellaneous" expenses. In his new streamlined plan, which adds up to the same over-all total, Mr. Sampson has pared the travel figure to \$25,000, the "miscellaneous" to \$26,000, but has come up with a new item—\$110,000 for the construction of a repository to house the tapes and papers of the Nixon Presidency.

It is an unconscionable request. A comparison with President Johnson's transition expenditures, even allowing for inflation, is instructive. Mr. Johnson received \$540,000 for an 18-month transition period while \$850,000 is being proposed for Mr. Nixon for eleven months. Mr. Johnson spent \$7,000 for travel, but the figure for Mr. Nixon is \$25,000. Mr. Johnson spent \$25,000 for office supplies, but it is proposed that Mr. Nixon spend \$67,000 in supplies for an office that was built adjacent to his home while he was President at a cost of \$720,000.

An expenditure of \$110,000 for a repository for Mr. Nixon's papers is absurd, particularly in view of the questionable wisdom of the agreement giving Mr. Nixon title to those materials in the first place. It is impossible to believe that there are no existing facilities adequate to house and to safeguard these materials.

Mr. Sampson's other arguments in support of this appropriation are equally flimsy, particularly his assertion that Mr. Nixon will require additional staff, security and travel allowances because of his legal troubles. President Ford has been overly generous with his "full, free and absolute" pardon, coming on top of Mr. Nixon's extensive and costly legal defense provided by the American taxpayers while he was in office. Moreover, Mr. Ford's generosity (despite his insistence on governmental economy) with regard to staff for Mr. Nixon is now running at an annual rate of \$340,000. Among those being supported on the White House payroll for Mr. Nixon's benefit are a \$42,500 top aide, a \$40,000 speechwriter and a \$36,000 secretary.

It should be remembered that by avoiding almost certain conviction in a Senate impeachment trial, Mr. Nixon also avoided losing even his pension. In these circumstances, he ought to receive the minimum required by law but not one penny more. There is, we believe, a discernible line between compassion and cronyism which seems to have eluded those who would shower imperial benefits on a man who defiled his public trust and debased the highest office in the land.