

# U.S. Still Spending on Key Biscayne

By Jack Anderson

Despite all the rhubarb over secret expenditures on former President Nixon's estates in Florida and California, federal money is still being poured into the Key Biscayne compound.

A team of General Services Administration workmen is busily ripping out partitions and repairing walls in at least two of the buildings, just as if Watergate never happened.

And seven Secret Service men are still puttering around the premises on vague security details, even though the former President has not even visited Key Biscayne since he left office Aug. 9.

When we approached the General Services Administration concerning the continued use of federal manpower and material for the Nixon home, a spokesman huffily denied any such activities.

But when my associate Bob Owens pointed out that, posing as a sandal-shod Florida tourist, he had observed the comings and goings of the government workmen, GSA conceded that repair work was going on.

It was only fair to "restore" the Nixon homes and other, rented dwellings in the compound to their pre-presidential condition, the GSA said. One of the homes under repair is owned by Nixon crony Robert Abplanalp.

Actually, the government had already done considerable work

on Abplanalp's home. While it was being used by the White House, it got a \$1,667 paint job and other improvements.

The GSA said the new work would be completed by Christmas, although the negotiations to get compensation from Nixon for improvements on the Key Biscayne property may go on for months.

Still at issue, for instance, is whether the Nixon-designed "security fence," costing \$66,314, and \$4,786 worth of carnation hibiscus shrubs surrounding it will be paid for by Nixon.

The Secret Service, meanwhile, has pulled out most of its detection equipment. The Coast Guard has phased out its five-year-old, \$2 million patrol of the Nixon beach area. And the Navy has removed the \$20,267 shark net that had protected the waterfront swimming areas of Nixon and his friend Bebe Rebozo.

**Undiplomatic Slip** — Rarely do America's envoys in rundown foreign capitals relax their stiff upper lips and criticize their hosts.

But a "Limited Official Use" cable in the State Department's file drawers bluntly reveals how U.S. Ambassador John Reinhardt regards his militarist Nigerian hosts.

Apparently upset over a proposed junket to the Nigerian capital of Lagos by Sen. Jacob K. Javits (R-N.Y.), Reinhardt wired the State Department that

appointments with government leaders might be hard to line up because the Nigerians preferred fun to fidelity.

"Must state frankly that arranging Sunday meetings with FMG (Federal Military Government) officials will not be easy," the diplomat cabled, "most of whom cannot be budgeted to attend any weekend gathering which is remotely official."

Reinhardt then switched to the Javits' hotel reservations. "I am having some second thoughts about the adequacy of Ikoyi hotel accommodations, which are only ones available," he wrote. "Hence, I urge that Sen. and Mrs. Javits stay at residence, where I believe I can arrange some informal gatherings with articulate FMG representatives and at the same time hopefully provide a few amenities not otherwise available in Lagos."

The document wryly concludes: "Assume that senator's seeming reluctance to spend two nights in Lagos stems from city's earned rating among the world's least inviting. However, we can guarantee some compensations for one eager to feel the African pulse, which beats rapidly and strongly in Nigeria."

**Fuddle Factory** — Sometimes Washington seems an enormous "Fuddle Factory" where everything goes wrong for the ordinary Americans the bureaucracy is supposed to serve.

For example, E. H. Weder, head of the Highland, Ill., Manufacturing and Sales Co., had for years sold cellophane Easter grass, which was flammable. When the Food and Drug Administration ordered him to stop, he dutifully complied.

At a cost of \$950,000 he destroyed his flammable stocks and converted his machines to produce safe, nonflammable grass. But he and many of his employees had to work 16 hours a day to fill enough new grass orders to stave off bankruptcy.

Then, a few months ago, he saw unsafe flammable grass for sale in a drugstore. To his bewilderment, he learned that the government had given the go-ahead to another manufacturer as long as the dangerous Easter grass was marked "Flammable."

Outraged, he called the FDA. It was all a \$950,000 misunderstanding, he was assured. Weder's only recourse now is to sue the government, which he lacks the time and money to do. In a letter to his sympathetic congressman, Phil Crane, (R-Mich.), Weder sounded the plaint of many small businessmen trapped inside Washington's "Fuddle Factory."

It is, he said, "persecution of small businesses by an unfeeling, stupid, cold, calculating, anti-business bureaucracy." The government goof almost destroyed his own life work and "the means of livelihood of hundreds of employees," he wrote.

© 1974, United Feature Syndicate