

# A Coming Brouhaha Over U.S. Gifts Abroad

By Vera Glaser

Washington

U.S. embassy officials in Cairo wince at mention of a \$3 million Navy helicopter, given last year by Richard Nixon to Egyptian President Sadat.

Red-faced and mystified, our diplomats see the expensive toy sitting idle in view of all who come and go at the airport. The American pilot whom Nixon left behind to train Egyptians in its use has long since packed up and departed.

Now Senator William Proxmire (Dem-Wis.) is raising new questions about lavish gifts abroad. He calls them "a slap in the face of the American taxpayer."

Nixon gave the helicopter and other goodies to Sadat a few months before he (Nixon) resigned. The largesse was strewn during a Mideast trip.

While in Egypt, Nixon also donated \$10 million in Egyptian pounds to Mrs. Sadat's favorite charity, the Loyalty and Hope Society, a funnel for medical aid to other Arab nations.

The donation was called "illegal" by Representative Lester L. Wolff (Dem-N.Y.).

After some research, the State Department justified the \$10 million for charity as "important to U.S. security."

Earlier this month, when the question was revived with an official at the State Department, he shrugged off the outlay as "monopoly money," maintaining it was "excess" U.S.-owned local currency.

Nixon's open-handedness caused a flap on Capitol Hill and curbs were written into the 1974 foreign assistance act.

But Proxmire thinks they do not go far enough.

He asked the General Accounting Office to gather cost information on gifts and was irked when the State Department resisted full disclosure.

Proxmire has introduced



SENATOR PROXMIRE  
'Slap in the face'

an amendment to the department's pending authorization bill.

It would ban gifts of more than \$50 between U.S. and foreign officials.

It would require the President to report to Congress on gifts to foreigners bought with money from private or non-appropriated sources.

And it would authorize the GAO to audit annually the State Department's diplomatic and consular service fund, which Proxmire calls "a catch-all slush fund used for everything from jewelry to disaster relief emergencies."

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