

Mr. Nixon and the Asian Subcontinent

Has Mr. Nixon eased off support for Pakistan and positioned his administration for some kind of informal mediation between India and Pakistan?

factors. He may fear that a Council debate would be bitter and ineffective (Peking's veto would protect Pakistan, Moscow's veto India), or that a debate would bring on a Soviet-American political confrontation that might in turn undermine his prospective trip to Moscow.

This stance toward the United Nations is key. If Pakistan had American support, it surely would be crying out for U.N. intervention. For against the embarrassment of having its abuses in East Pakistan aired, it would stand to gain major advantage from focusing world attention on India's clear and admitted crossings of its frontier.

It seems doubtful that, in this interval, Mr. Nixon would want to risk an open mediation initiative. His best line of approach is perhaps indicated by the recent trial balloon, quickly shot down, that he was considering a personal appeal to President Yahya to release Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the East Pakistani figure who holds the key—if anyone does—to a political settlement.

Mr. Nixon's hesitation to approach the United Nations has doubtless been fed by various political

peace. However, if Mr. Nixon is not so pressing President Yahya, then he has no legitimate reason whatever for holding off. For the only reason to delay is to try to force a political settlement that would preclude an all-out Indo-Pakistani war. That effort failing, neither the risks to other American diplomatic initiatives nor the footdragging of other countries nor the dim prospects of effective United Nations action would constitute an acceptable excuse. The spectacle of an American president sitting by while India and Pakistan went to unrestrained war would be unthinkable. Our responsibilities to global order no less than our membership in the United Nations commit us to the quest for international peace.

The Tax Bill: Withdrawal at Home

As a venture in fiscal policy, President Nixon's tax bill has two large defects. It reduces public revenues, inflexibly and permanently, at a time of great need for health care, education, housing, and all the rest of that familiar list. And it also contains several flagrantly protectionist clauses of the sort most likely to invite a response in kind abroad.

tively little money, they will have a highly unfortunate effect on our reputation abroad. The administration itself wrote some of these restrictions into its original version of the bill, and Congress has made them much worse. The Senate has voted the President a sweeping authority to restrict any imports adversely affecting American industries or our balance of payments. The Buy American clause applies the investment tax credit only to American products as long as the regrettable surcharge on imports remains in effect. The domestic international sales corporation (DISC) provision is an elegant tax dodge only vaguely related to its putative purpose of encouraging exports. At best, it is the kind of hidden export subsidy that the administration deplors in other countries.

When the White House sent the bill to Congress, it was heavily biased toward benefits for business. The idea was to stimulate industry to expand and hire more people. But investment tax credits do not generally have much effect in slack times, when industry is operating far below capacity. The accelerated depreciation rules, which the bill ratifies, have been in effect since last January without any very remarkable effect on the economy.

There is a good deal of irony in several Republican senators' threats that Mr. Nixon might veto the bill. They want the veto in order to kill the campaign-financing provision, which is one of the tax bill's most valuable elements. And the fact is that the bill's most objectionable aspects, from the excessive and permanent investment credits to DISC, were in Mr. Nixon's original draft and were passed, with various modifications, by both houses. It is a profoundly imperfect bill and, aside from the campaign funding, offers little to applaud. But there is one very good reason to urge Mr. Nixon to sign it: its best provisions are highly controversial, while its worst are not. Given the present temper of both the administration and the Congress, any subsequent version is likely to be even more objectionable.

Congress has done a good deal to redress the balance, but chiefly by voting large reductions in individuals' taxes. Some of these reductions, particularly those for people with low incomes, are entirely desirable. But the result is a bill that, as it left the Senate, would reduce federal revenues by well over \$16 billion next year. That amounts to more than 3 per cent of the present level of revenues, counting taxes, trust funds and all. It is a very substantial piece of the purse.

Rescuing the Mayflower

There has been much disturbing talk lately about replacing the 46-year-old Mayflower Hotel with yet another concrete-crated glassbox. But this talk has now been spiked by the news that Western International Hotel, a subsidiary of United Airlines, has been signed up to help the Mayflower's owners, William Cohen and D. F. Antonelli, manage the famous hotel. The Western managers have made clear that they have come east not to demolish the place but to renovate it, and that is tremendously cheering.

flower was built in a period which, artistically speaking, was fairly nondescript, at least from today's perspective. But the period—the twenties—did have a distinctive, if not an assertive style. And the Mayflower has a great opportunity to develop that identity, to become as great and enchanting a period piece of the 1920s as so many older hotels, (such as New York's Plaza) are of the 1890s.

We profess to a certain partiality towards the Mayflower. It is, to be sure, not really an "old" hotel. (What, after all, is a mere 46 years?) There is nothing particularly distinguished about the Mayflower's architecture (as there is about the doomed Willard, for instance). Nor is there much about the interior decor that lends itself readily to a descriptive adjective or stylistic classification, except that we find it thoroughly pleasing and appropriate. The reason for this lack of an assertive architectural and interior style is that the May-

We hope the new managers understand this and that their modernization will not attempt to change the Mayflower into something it isn't. We particularly hope they abandon persistent plans to change the hotel's splendid lobby into a two-story shopping mall with 40 or 50 stores. Another Tyson's corner at LaSalle Street would destroy the Mayflower's ambience and renown and any prospect of a great future. This is not to say that a few more shops along Connecticut Avenue and LaSalle Street would hurt. But they should be shops within a great hotel, rather than a shopping center with rooms for rent on top.

The White House Conference on Aging

Three White House Conferences have been held to date by the Nixon administration—on hunger in 1969, on children in 1970 and on youth in 1971. A fourth conference, on aging, begins its working sessions Monday. Some 3,400 delegates are scheduled to attend the meetings, discussions and debates that will last through Thursday. The reports of the three earlier conferences are now tucked away on quiet shelves, proverbial trees that fell unheard in a forest. Yet, 3,400 people would not be gathering here if they didn't share some feeling of hope that life for the nation's 20 million over-65 citizens can be improved.

Church of Idaho, has stated: "I think there is no country, that has the means as we do, that has done as badly in providing for the elderly as we have here in the United States. This is one of the greatest travesties, I think, of the contemporary American way. It's one of the most conspicuous of our failures. We have our successes, we have much to be proud of in this country, but this treatment of the elderly is something that we ought, by right, to be ashamed of, and I think that's why it cries out so for attention."

What this life is often like, if the brush of statistics can adequately paint a detailed picture of frustration and anguish, is clear. Older people comprise 10 per cent of the U.S. population—but 20 per cent of all-poverty victims. Thirty-three per cent of their personal income goes for housing, while younger citizens spend 23 per cent. They account for 25 per cent of annual admissions to mental hospitals—elderly homeowners—two-thirds of all older persons—often live on steady incomes while unsteady tax rates soar. In 1970, Medicare met only 43 per cent of aged people's health bill, down from 45 per cent the year before. Some 24,000 nursing homes care for one million elderly, but as Representative David Pryor (D-Ark.) has reported, many are highly commercialized and dehumanizing.

Getting the federal government to do more for the elderly will be extremely difficult in the years ahead but not impossible. Politically, the old have strength, even though attention is now on the youth vote. Business Week magazine, for example, points out that in Florida "older voters were the deciding factor in electing two political unknowns to major office: Democrat Lawton M. Chiles Jr. to the U.S. Senate and Reuben Askew to the governorship." Nationally, the old account for 17 per cent of the voting population.

Few of these facts are new to the delegates meeting here this week or to anyone who has been following the useful work of the Senate Special Committee on Aging. Its chairman, Senator Frank

Perhaps the most hopeful sign of this week's conference is that so many of the elderly themselves—both in Washington now and in their home communities—are eager to be involved in follow-up work that is fruitful. Time is what the aged do not have. As Dr. Flemming observed: "We are constantly saying, well, if we do some planning now, some years from now it may be possible for us to deal with a particular issue. But those who are elderly now haven't got the slightest interest in that kind of talk. My hope is that we will see coming out of the conference action programs that can be implemented within 15 months..."

An Unremarked Presidential Birthday

Remembering Franklin Pierce (Which Few People Do)

By David Epstein

AS IT HAS in the past, the country this week ignored the birth date of President Franklin Pierce, who, in the opinion of those who have reviewed his presidency, ranks as the most obscure and among the least successful of the American Presidents.

Pierce's vice president, William R. King, was not present at the occasion and, by special act of Congress, was allowed to receive the oath office in Havana, Cuba. Within a few days after taking the oath, King proceeded to die.

Pierce's obscurity is such that even humorous anecdotal material generated by his life and times has been forgotten, much like his presidential administration. For example, in 1845, Pierce, then a captain in the Mexican War, in a cavalry charge near Vera Cruz, Mexico, fainted and fell off his horse. During the presidential campaign of 1852,

At the conclusion of the Inauguration day, Pierce upon returning to the White House with one of his sides, found the place in complete disarray, all the Fillmore servants having earlier departed. Finding only a single candle to light and undoubtedly cursing the darkness, Pierce could locate only a mattress on the floor upon which to spend his first night in the White House.

The writer, a Washington attorney, is founder of Friends of Franklin Pierce, whose motto is "To rescue him from the obscurity he so richly deserves."

Uniquely in American history, Pierce went through four years in office without a change in his cabinet officials, which included Jefferson Davis, as the Secretary of War and soon to be President of the Confederacy.

This incident was cited as evidence of Pierce's cowardice. In a letter, self-adherents asserted that the true version of the occurrence was that the horse had stumbled, and in the process of being struck from the animal, the saddle horn threw Pierce in the groin, rendering him unconscious.

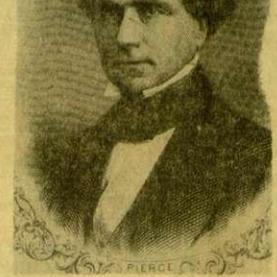
Various historians, viewing his administration, have found little to discuss. One historian, describing the work of each of the na-

Although he had been a former representative and senator in the Congress prior to seeking the presidency, the quality which made Pierce most acceptable for the office was that he was a Northerner who held strong Southern sympathies in viewing the sectional issues which were then, in the pre-Civil War days, rending the country. Persons of his stripe were, in some quarters, sardonically referred to as "doughfaces." A bitter piece of doggerel on this theme was applied to Pierce who, like his predecessor Fillmore and successor Buchanan, were in the view of many, bent on ignoring or avoiding the key issues of the time—the expansion of slavery.

THE JUDGMENT of Pierce's contemporaries on his administration was harsh. Nathaniel Hawthorne, a college classmate at Bowdoin College, close friend and biographer, admitted "there are scores of men in the country that seem brighter than he is."

The dough, the dough, the facial dough, The more that yields when you tweak it so! It sighs for the spoils—it sells its soul For a spoonful of pap from the Treasury bowl!"

alph Waldo Emerson thought that Hawthorne was "unlucky in having for a friend a man who could not be befriended; whose misable administration admits, but one excuse, imbecility. Pierce was either the worst, or he was the weakest, of all our Presidents." Indeed, Emerson, upon receiving a book from Hawthorne which was dedicated to Pierce, immediately tore out the dedicatory page. Nor did Emerson give for believing that a particular compassion was necessary in those pre-Freudian days, to assess Pierce in the light of his personal misfortunes. Pierce, at the time he was President-elect, was involved in a tragic train wreck with his wife and his then only surviving child. The child was killed and his wife, as a result, was unhinged for the rest of her life. One of the other passengers on the train sued the railroad for negligence and Pierce, of all things, hired a prominent lawyer to defend the railroad! The lawyer won the case. The reason Pierce gave for defending the railroad was that his wife was, in the view that the son's death was caused by divine intervention so that Pierce would be able to give his undivided attention to the burdens of the presidency.



tion's Presidents with respect to their contributions to the City of Washington, states as to Pierce only that he carried on the work of Millard Fillmore in building an asylum, the predecessor of St. Elizabeth's Hospital. Another historian who has studied great presidential decisions attributes three to Millard Fillmore, who has some claim to presidential obscurity, and none whatever to Pierce. During Fillmore's administration Commodore Perry opened Japan to the West; the United States purchased that part of the Southwest which became known as the Gadsden Purchase; and the first perforated postage stamps were issued by the government.

IN recalling Pierce, aside from musing on the quaint occurrences of his life and administration, two conclusions may be drawn. First, contrary to the conventional wisdom, an individual does not, merely by assuming the presidency, "grow" in office. Pierce, as it were, although he had actively sought the office in his inaugural address, with a certain amount of unintended prophecy, stated that he had "been borne to a position so suitable for others rather than desirable for myself" and added, "You have summoned me in my weakness; you must sustain me by your strength."

Pierce during his presidency, while horseback riding in Rock Creek Park, ran a woman down and earned the distinction of being the first person, as President, to be involved in a criminal offense. While this particular incident may not have been attributable to his heavy drinking, Pierce was, as one historian put it, a "tragic figure" who "suffered from an overfondness for alcohol and a violent allergy to it."

The Inauguration paraded the administration. The Inaugural Parade was snubbed because of Pierce's failure to attend or even respond to an invitation to attend a party given in his honor by the Fire Department.

At the conclusion of his administration, Pierce sought the nomination for a second

For the Record...

Politics' Dirty Little Secret

The following is excerpted from a recent speech by John W. Gardner, chairman of Common Cause.

The President's capacity to reward his friends is immeasurable. Simply by the level at which he sets an item in the budget he can alter the outlook for an entire industry. By resisting or endorsing regulatory legislation, he can alter the environment in which thousands of firms do business.

If one examines the world of politics and government—local political machines, city government, counties, states, the Congress of the United States, regulatory agencies, the courts—it appears at first glance that most of these institutions are merely inefficient. A second glance reveals that all too many of them are corrupt.

When the campaign begins, the party money-raisers go down their list of "friends"—behind the scenes—a vast game of barter and purchase involving campaign contributions, appointment to high office, business favors, favorable legal decisions, favorable location of defense installations. It is a game that is going on all the time at every level of government. And it is paid for ultimately by the American taxpayer.

There are many honest and decent men and women in politics and we must honor them. But it is hard for them to survive. No one would be so foolish as to suggest that Americans can rid politics of the trading of favors, or the peddling of one's most loyal associates. But the situation, as it goes far beyond normal considerations of loyalty, party cohesion and representation of one's constituency.

It is not just the U.S. citizen who is hurt by the vast, shady game of political barter and purchase. America as a nation is hurt when great decisions are made by venal men, concerned chiefly with private gain, the payment of political obligations, or the consolidation of personal power. Sound public policy cannot be formulated. Programs cannot be soundly administered. The public process falls apart.

Every level of government has enormous favors to hand out in grants and contracts. The selection of a developer for an urban renewal contract may mean millions for the firm involved. Senators and representatives influence the allocation of billions in reclamation projects, defense installations, model cities grants and so on.

The time has come to do something about it. The time has come to stem the tidal wave of political film-fam. Perhaps at a less critical time in U.S. history Americans could tolerate ubiquitous rascality. But not now. Americans cannot tolerate the dominance of court-house politics, the shady deal and the crass payoff. The U.S. is in deep trouble.

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