

Ruling by Divine Right

Americans have an undying need to be ruled by royalty. Perhaps it goes back to colonial days when we still were subjects of the British crown. But whatever the reason, each year we choose more queens and kings than there have been in the entire history of Britain. We have homecoming queens, drag race queens, sock hop queens, high school class queens and kings, kings of rock 'n' roll, even state fair swine queens.

The authors of the Constitution saw the danger in royalty and banned Congress from awarding titles to citizens. But for some reason, the American public hasn't seen fit to keep this outlook. When Thomas Jefferson was inaugurated, he walked to the ceremony, spoke of subordination of the government to individual rights and then walked home. His home was a typical boarding house. When he got there he found the dinner table was full, so he went to his room without eating. He was no hick, he was a famous scholar, writer and philosopher, yet no one saw him as a god just because he had been elected president.

In the last 170 years something has gone amiss. At a recent state dinner, President Nixon slowly descended the White House stairs, Marine trumpeters snapped to attention and, raising their instruments, played *Hail to the Chief*. Stationed throughout the White House were military guards in full dress uniforms. All that was missing from this palatial elegance was the White House castle guards which were disbanded after much public ridicule.

The attitude of the men who occupy the office also seems to have changed. George Washington rejected the notion that people



O that I were as great as my grief or lesser than my name!
Or that I could forget what I have been!
Or not remember what I must be now!
King Richard II; Act II, Scene 3

should call him "your excellency." Instead he preferred "Mr. President." Abraham Lincoln confided to friends that he felt awkward when people called him "President Lincoln." He preferred "Mr. Lincoln." Americans would be fortunate if such a humble man were president today.

In his speeches, Nixon reminds people that

he indeed is "the President." He uses this come-on as a way to con the public into believing he knows what is best for them. His addresses reek of self-glorification and pseudodivinity. He seems to be saying "I rule by divine right." His actions give further evidence to this. For instance, he has claimed the power to make war without consent of Congress, as if he alone can tell who must die to make the world safe for aristocracy.

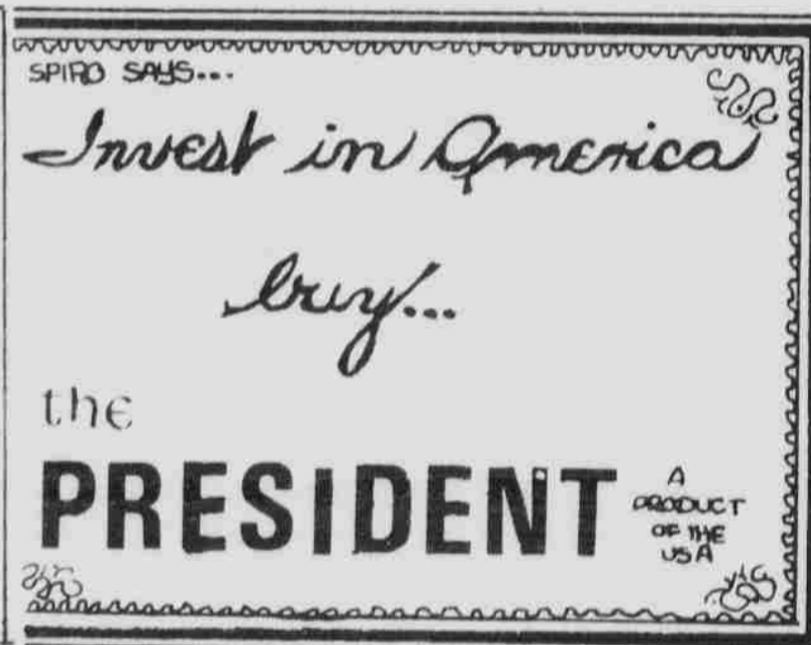
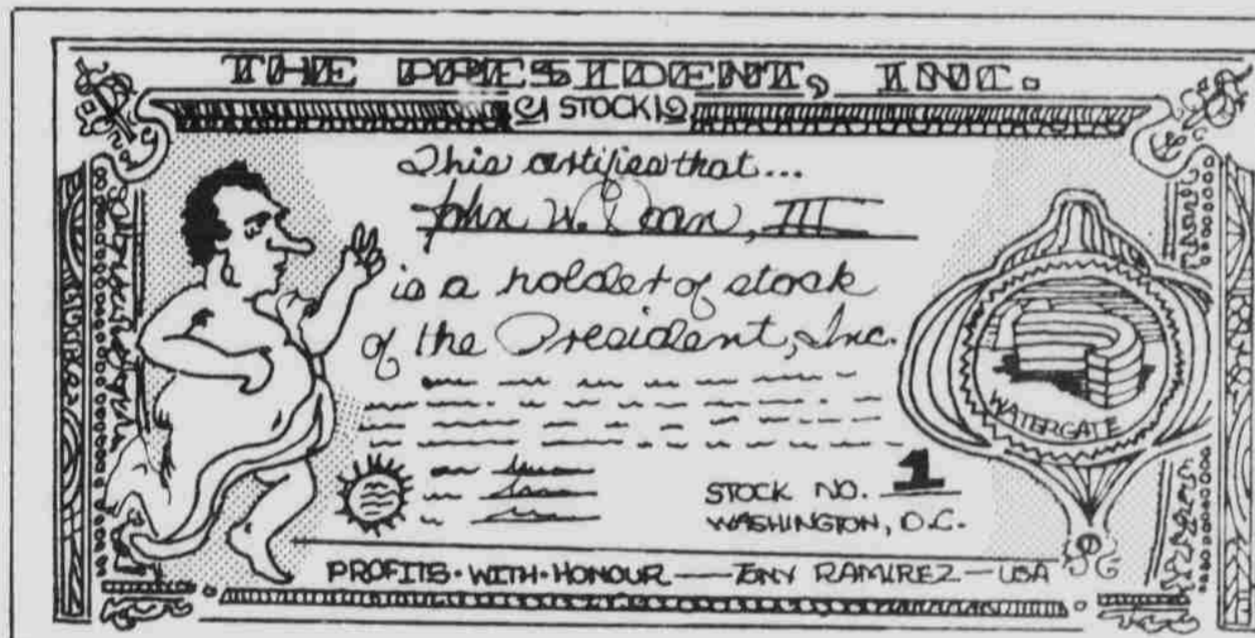
This sort of attitude is infectious. The Founding Fathers wrote safeguards into the constitution in hope of stopping the abuse of power by officeholders. Now many echo Nixon, speaking of impeachment as something which might "damage the presidency." It seems they think the office was something sacred.

Watergate has proven that the American public is naive enough to believe that there is something holy about the office of the president or its aides. It has proven that saints can be sinners and that even Nixon in his omnipresence can be blind to wrongdoing. Americans must realize that high office does not assure that officials will have a sense of ethical responsibility. They must realize the Nixon administration is filled with men, men who are capable of breaking the law. They must understand that the administration rules by the will of the people, not divine right.

Nixon's refusal to yield the Watergate tapes to Judge John Sirica is evidence of how the administration views itself. Perhaps it is coincidence, but one of the tenants of divine right of kings was that the monarch is above the law. It seems Nixon finally has stepped out of the closet and shown his true colors: he believes himself, like the kings of old, above the law.

When the American public and the President consider putting the cloak of divinity on the figure of a president-king they ought to recall what happened to Charles I of England. Charles believed himself a ruler by divine right—until the day he was beheaded.

Michael (O.J.) Nelson



Invest in America; buy Nixon

arthur hoppe
innocent bystander

Dear Mr. President: I, Joe Sikspak, American, take pen in hand to stick a finger in your pie. Have you thought of going public?

This idea comes to you from Doc Houlihan, my friendly credit dentist. To take my mind off other things as I climb in the chair, I ask him about this San Clemente deal, which I don't much understand.

"Why, it's a simple thing, Joe," says Doc. "Open wider, please. In this great democracy of ours, when a man becomes president, he gets an airplane, a brass band and a couple hundred rich friends. They come with the office."

"So one day our President says to his friend, Mr. Applenap, 'Apple, old pal, I am down to my last three houses and I'm a little on the shorts and the wife's got her eye on this beach place and...'"

"Say no more," says Mr. Applenap, peeling off a couple of million dollar bills. "Money means nothing where friendship is concerned. And I know a good investment when I see one." What's more,

he cuts in his friend, Mr. Reboso, which is what high financiers do when they've got a sure thing going."

"Arrrgghhh," says I, my mouth being otherwise occupied.

"You're right, Joe," says the Doc. "It doesn't seem fair. That's why the President ought to go public, like my brother, Harry, did with his shoe stores. All the President's got to do is incorporate and issue a million shares in himself at, say, \$5 par. That way, we could all own a piece of the President. Rinse, please."

"Would you buy a share in the President, Inc.?" says I.

"That I would, Joe," says the Doc. "Close a little. The way to play the market is to buy what the insiders are buying. What's good enough for Mr. Applenap is good enough for me. And think of the advantages to the President in going public."

"Arrrgghhh?" says I.
"I'm glad you asked, Joe," says the Doc. "Well, first off, he could spend all he wanted fixing up his summer, winter, spring and fall White Houses. 'It is sound corporate management to keep up the

physical plant,' says he, 'as a duty to my stockholders.' And who's going to argue with that? In fact, who's going to argue with him about anything, Joe?"

"Arrrgghhh," says I.
"You're right again, Joe," says the Doc. "No stockholder's going to knock a product he's got his hard-earned cash in. And think how happy you'll be when the headlines say, 'President's Stock Soars!' Which, considering that all of us will be rooting for him, it's bound to. Yes, sir, with us owning a piece of the President, we'll triple our money overnight. Rinse, please."

So I'm putting away 50 bucks, President, in case you go along with this great idea. Only one thing bothers me. Like I say to the Doc while I'm putting on my coat, "When this stock comes out, what's to stop Mr. Applenap and those other high financiers from cornering the market like usual?"

"Well, Joe," he says, "then our great democracy wouldn't be any worse off than it is right now."

Truly yours,
Joe Sikspak, American
Copyright Chronicle Publishing Co. 1973