

Gift to the Nation

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lesson was learned from the British National Trust, which found that the great English houses simply could not be carried financially without provision of a fund for that purpose as a prerequisite for donation.

Landmarks are not the only cultural properties feeling the pinch. Museums are finding that improvements and new construction require endowments for maintenance from the donors. Public parks offer sad demonstrations of the fact that gifts without maintenance funds become costly burdens.

The Federal Government is no stranger to the problem. The Presidential libraries law permitted donation of Presidential archive-museums to the nation, which then took on the responsibility for their upkeep. As they grow grander, and as inflation adds to the burden, upkeep is approaching original costs.

San Clemente is already the subject of much debate in terms of costs and taxes. Quite apart from the question whether this Western "White House" is needed, the gift of San Clemente to the country without endowment would not be an unmixed blessing. It would be an unseemly and ironic fate for it to become a national albatross.

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If the United States Government wants to know what the chief problem will be in maintaining San Clemente, President and Mrs. Nixon's proposed bequest to the American people, it can ask the National Trust for Historic Preservation—and the answer will be money. For years now, the National Trust has made it a general policy not to accept gifts of buildings or land without an endowment for their upkeep. This important