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## Mr. Nixon's Weekend

“WE MUST take every available step to conserve energy in order to avoid the potential hardships of the short-range energy shortage,” said President Nixon on Friday morning, just before he boarded his four-engine jetliner to fly to Florida for the weekend. The energy crisis “will require some sacrifice by all and no suffering by any,” he declared, as he signed the Alaska pipeline bill before leaving for the plane.

In the interest of conservation, Mr. Nixon left his backup plane at home and had his pilot slow the flight down to 475 miles an hour, despite the inconvenience of adding 7 minutes to flight. That saved 200 gallons of fuel. At the lower speed, according to the deputy press secretary, Gerald L. Warren, the presidential jet consumes only about 2,000 gallons of fuel, each way, on the weekend commute to Key Biscayne.

The purpose of the trip to Florida this weekend, according to the White House, was to enable the President to make several speeches in that part of the country. It is the President's duty to move around the country and address the public. Presidential spokesmen, assistants and secretaries all unanimously agree that the trip is scheduled with nothing but that presidential duty in mind, and it is only a coincidence that the speeches happen to be down near his house in Key Biscayne. It is purely a working trip.

If a resident of Bowie, for example, were to drive to his office at the Commerce Department, perhaps that too could be described as a working trip since, after all, he is driving to work. If he had a large, heavy car he could commute daily to work for four years, with the air conditioner going, on the same amount of fuel that Mr. Nixon's weekend trip requires. If he lived in Vienna, he could commute for five years on that much fuel. If he got rid of his big car and got a small one, he might go back and forth, all by himself, for perhaps 11 years on Mr. Nixon's weekend ration. But that kind of commuting, with one person to the car, violates the spirit of the conservation campaign that Mr. Nixon is now leading. “If each of us joins in this effort, joins with the spirit and determination that have always graced the American character, then half the battle will already be won,” he told the country in his latest energy speech. “We have an energy crisis, but there is no crisis of the American spirit.”

Mr. Nixon has also called on everyone to lower their thermostats. The temperature in the Oval Office is down to 68 degrees. The occupant of the Oval Office is elsewhere, of course, for a long weekend. Mr. Nixon's trip offers a small but illuminating explanation of his ability to inspire and lead the nation.