

White House Not Practicing Fuel Austerity

By Jack Anderson

To save critical fuels, President Nixon has called upon his fellow Americans to turn down their thermostats. "That means in this room, too," he said solemnly.

He also cut back the allocations of jet fuel for aircraft and asked governors to reduce highway speed limits to 50 miles per hour. Afterwards, he showed up late for a dinner honoring his wife, Pat, and cracked: "I'm sorry I'm late. I could drive only 50 miles an hour."

The truth is that the President and his aides haven't been practicing the austerity they have been preaching. He drafted his public appeal in balmy Key Biscayne, Fla., where the warm sun kept the temperatures comfortable. His luxury jet burned 8,000 gallons of fuel to make the round trip.

The following weekend, he helicoptered to his Camp David retreat, which is only about an hour from the White House at 50 miles per hour. The round trip took an estimated 140 gallons of fuel.

The President has made a few minor concessions to the fuel pinch. On his trip to Florida last weekend, he ordered his jet to reduce speeds from 525 miles per hour to 474, and he canceled his normal back-up plane flight.

His Irish Setter, King Timahoe who is a difficult helicopter passenger and used to follow the President to Camp David in the back seat of a chauffeur-driven limousine, now shares his car with low-ranking White House aides.

For a man who has devoted a lifetime to striving to reach the White House, Richard Nixon spends less time there than any past President. But a White House spokesman told us the President has no plans to curtail his travel.

The men around the President have also displayed little spirit of sacrifice. Energy czar John Love, who wants his fellow citizens to drive slower and drive less, is whisked around Washington in a Chrysler New Yorker from the White House motor pool. His chauffeur picks him up at his home in the mornings and deposits him at his doorstep at night.

Interior Secretary Rogers C. B. Morton declared on national television that "energy has been too cheap" in the United States. Gasoline is \$1.35 a gallon in Italy, he remarked, in an obvious hint that American motorists should be paying more for their gas.

The taxpayers, of course, pay for Morton's gasoline. As a concession, he has given up his

White House Chrysler and now gets around in a government-owned Plymouth—chauffeur-driven, of course.

When he flies, the six-foot-seven-inch Morton goes first class, courtesy of the taxpayers—because he is too big, he complains, "to fit into a coach seat." He also makes use of Interior Department airplanes, but only, said a spokesman, "when his schedule is screwed up."

The Pentagon has also made a big show of reducing temperatures and cutting back fuel consumption. But this hasn't cramped the life style of the military brass. The Pentagon still operates its sleek fleet of chauffeur-driven cars to ferry around the brass and their bigwig friends.

The demand for VIP limousine service is so great, in fact, that the Pentagon is forced to rent cars to supplement its motor pool.

Nor has the military curtailed its personalized worldwide flight service for junketing congressmen and other assorted VIPs. Three days after the President's TV appeal to save fuel, the Army ferried a planeload of congressmen and military officers to West Point for the Army-Miami University football game.

Throughout the government, indeed, the bureaucrats are

burning more gas than ever. Government automobiles burned 34 million more gallons of gasoline in 1973 than in 1972. And despite the oil squeeze, the projected increase for 1974 is an additional 30 million-gallon increase.

Down the line the bureaucrats apparently take their example from the President, who has his own fleet of five jetliners, 15 helicopters, 11 Jetstars, 23 limousines and a yacht.

Technically, the aircraft are owned by the military, which has asked Congress for money to buy 17 new choppers to replace those now in use. Two more jumbo communications planes are also being outfitted, and the White House is shopping for four more medium-range jets.

When the President isn't using his personal air force, the planes are routinely taken aloft for test flights so they will also be in top condition when he calls. Usually, a back-up plane and press plane accompany the President on all major flights, carrying everything from the hot line phone to the First Lady's hairdresser.

These Boeing 707 jetliners each consume about 2,000 gallons of fuel per hour. A round-trip to San Clemente, in other words, uses up 20,000 gallons.

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