

White House Train Poses Problems

By Carroll Kilpatrick
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President Truman used to say that moving a President was like moving a circus, and President Nixon is discovering how true that is as he tries to find a way to get to Florida without using aviation fuel.

President Truman didn't say so, but he also could have noted that it costs almost as much to move a President as to move a circus.

If Mr. Nixon takes a train to Florida for a week in the sun, the taxpayers may have another complaint against him. For there is no way for him to go anywhere without spending thousands of dollars.

It could be that it would be less expensive for him to take the Spirit of '76, the big four-engine plane that con-

sumes about 2,000 gallons of fuel an hour, than for him to take a train.

It certainly would be simpler and easier for the Secret Service, the White House transportation office and the assorted aides who accompany a President. But a plane presumably uses more energy than a train, depending on how you figure it.

The White House confirmed reports yesterday that the President is considering a train trip to Florida, possibly leaving here the day after Christmas and returning a week or 10 days later. Mr. Nixon would have a special car hooked on the rear of a regular passenger train, deputy secretary Gerald L. Warren said.

Sounds simple. But that is only the beginning. The President must have a signal car as well, for he cannot be out

of touch for the 24 or 26 hours the trip to Miami would take. He also must have a dining car, space for Secret Service agents, communications experts and presidential assistants.

If three cars are added, an extra engine would be required to pull the train, and that would mean additional fuel and expense.

The government owns a signal car from the days when Presidents traveled by train, but no one seems to know how much it will cost to put it into satisfactory condition and to install modern equipment.

When Franklin D. Roosevelt was President, he traveled to Hyde Park, N.Y., almost every weekend until the outbreak of World War II. Then he went almost every other weekend. His

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car was not hitched onto a regular passenger train, but was part of a special train made up for his use.

Ahead of every presidential train goes a pilot train to check the rails and to make certain no bomb is on the tracks.

Warren said there would not have to be a pilot train for the President to go to Florida. Instead of a pilot train, Warren said, the regular passenger train would be broken up into two sections, and the advance section would serve as the pilot train.

Warren would not discuss security

problems, but in the past whenever a President went anywhere by train all bridges and tunnels along the route were guarded, requiring the services of hundreds of guards—and many gallons of gasoline to get them into position.

The President's purpose, as Warren put it, is to encourage Americans "to use public transportation, including trains."

Warren disputed a report that Col. Ralph D. Albertazzie, the President's pilot, would take the Spirit of '76 to Florida on a standby basis even if Mr. Nixon used the train. Not so, he said.

Warren also said it is not necessary for Albertazzie to fly the President's

plane for three hours each week for systems checks and crew training, and that Albertazzie's superiors had told him the plane will not be flown that much in the future. Before the fuel crisis he flew the Spirit of '76 a minimum of six hours a week for training purposes.

When aboard the Spirit of '76, the President has instant communication with the White House and the State and Defense Departments. The communications equipment is of the most sophisticated kind, enabling him to talk with any official and almost any foreign government with complete security.