

Rowland Evans and Robert Novak

Mr. Nixon

Needs

A Rest

"What he really needs is a one month vacation, without any interruption."

That careful recommendation from an intimate of President Nixon reflects no particular fear that the President, groping out of the horrors of Watergate, is on the verge of nervous exhaustion.

It does reflect a view, now widening into the political consciousness of many politicians ranging from very friendly to hostile toward President Nixon, that the President should take a long breather from the heavy pressures of the Watergate crisis these past six months. The toll has been enormous.

Politicians accustomed to watching the President — any President — for signs of mood, direction or work habits are flabbergasted at the extraordinary changes of scenery which now seem such an essential part of Mr. Nixon's regular life.

The record of the peripatetic President's last three weeks of travel reads like a man desperately searching for a peace he cannot find: Aug. 9 at the White House; Aug. 10 and 11 at Camp David; Aug. 15 back at the White

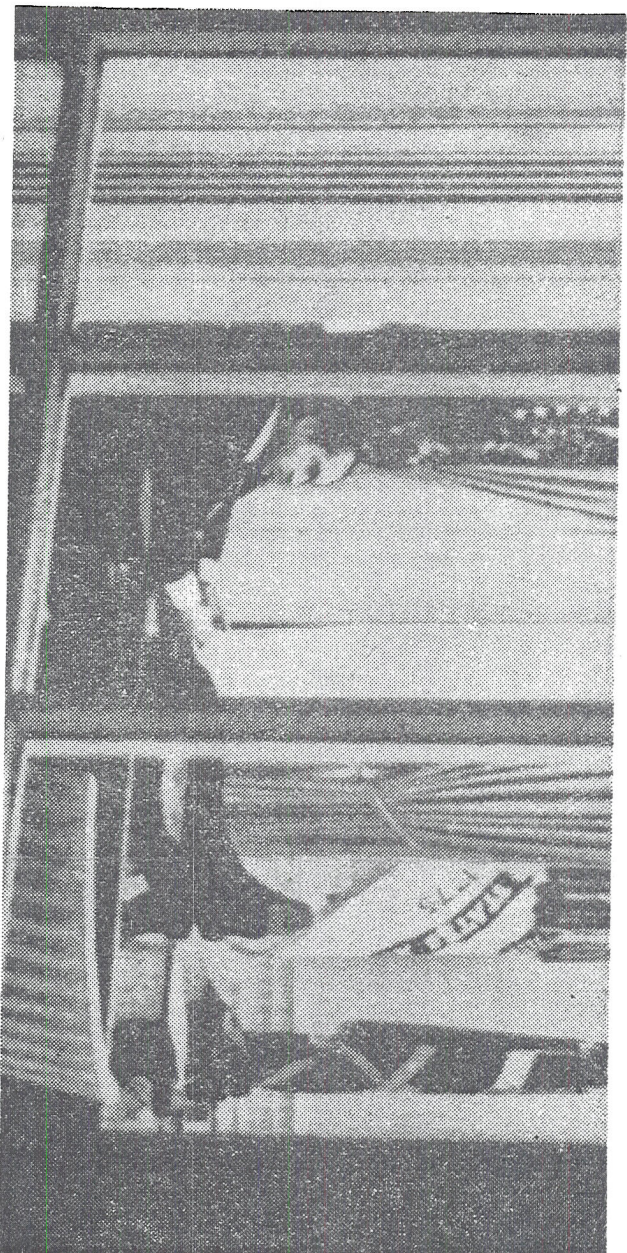
House for two nights; Aug. 17 at Key Biscayne for three nights; Aug. 20 at San Clemente for 10 days.

Mr. Nixon is due back East, in Washington or Camp David, today. So, during the past three weeks, he has moved from one place to another no less than eight times.

Every politician we have discussed this with agrees that no one can either work well or rest well under such conditions of permanent floating. As one presidential ally told us: "The President says he wants only to get on with the job of being President and leave Watergate behind, but how is that possible under the travel schedule that keeps pulling him away from the Oval Office?"

Moreover, the way Mr. Nixon has been spending his time the past few weeks strongly indicates that even in the Oval Office—or more likely in his preferred office in the Executive Office Building—the President has hardly been able to concentrate on "getting on with the job." Thus, he has consumed vast amounts of time studying the transcript of the Senate Watergate hearings, not cursorily but in unwholesome detail.

Presidential aides justified this



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study as inescapable cramming for his Aug. 22 press conference, stating further that Mr. Nixon's ability to come up with names and dates during his hostile questioning proves the time was well spent.

But not without serious cost to the President's repeated pleas that he be allowed to "get on with the job."

In two major recent appointments, for example, President Nixon has failed to find time to discuss any details at all either with the newly named officials themselves or with other high officials directly concerned. In both cases, these intimate discussions were conducted for the President by the White House chief of staff, Alexander M. Haig Jr.

President Nixon is even more inaccessible than he used to be for the kind of rambling, gossipy political talk with top aides which other Presidents have found invaluable to sharpen political perceptions about what is going on outside in the real world. Instead, Mr. Nixon's ability to let down his hair seems limited to old crony Charles G. (Bebe) Rebozo.

This heightened introversion in a President who has always tended to be a loner became clearly visible with the

disclosure this week of the President's departure in an unmarked car from his San Clemente estate to cruise the California freeways with Rebozo. Mr. Nixon's idol, Woodrow Wilson, likewise slipped out of the White House for long drives in the countryside with his wife, Edith, at the climax of his presidential crisis a half century ago.

Preoccupation with his own descent on the slippery Watergate sluiceway from last November's heights of popularity has also taken a heavy toll in the President's legislative planning for his second term. Fundamentals of the New American Revolution, including special revenue-sharing and an aid-to-education bill that administration officials regard as extremely important, have gone unnoticed by Mr. Nixon.

Yet, intimates of the President are not surprised at this, considering the deep and ruthless cut Watergate has made in his presidency. Not blaming Mr. Nixon, they are hoping he, too, has a realistic understanding of the fearful toll he has had to pay. Only then, they believe, will Richard Nixon cease his ubiquitous wanderings, take the long vacation he requires and begin to restore his tainted presidency.