

Frank van der Linden Post

Nixon and Agnew— Couple of 'Cool Cats'

THE CRITICS of President Nixon, who still cannot understand why he kept Spiro T. Agnew as his running mate, could find the answer to the question by studying the character of the two men and their personalities.

The truth is Mr. Nixon and Agnew are so much alike that they could almost be called psychological twin brothers.

The President admires his Vice President for exactly the same traits he most values in himself. He said as much to a few of us reporters who gathered around his desk in the Oval Office recently for an impromptu press conference.

THREE TIMES in two sentences, Mr. Nixon praised Agnew for being "cool." "When it gets down to the final tough decision," the President said, "he is, from my evaluation, always cool and poised, and is one who therefore could be expected to make decisions in the future in a calm, cool, judicial way."

"Now, that does not mean that all of his decisions will be good because calm, cool, judicial men make bad decisions just as emotional men sometimes make good decisions, but my point is that in all of the so-called mini-crises and major crises we have had in the administration, he has been strong, courageous and loyal."

Mr. Nixon warmly appreciates the loyal support he received from his "calm, cool" Vice President in the crucial decisions of the war in Southeast Asia: The decisions to enter Cambodia, and, last May 8, to mine the harbors of North Vietnam in

defiance of Soviet snipping. Agnew backed his chief also in his resolve to make the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty with the Russians, which involved, as Mr. Nixon said, "a fight between the hawks and the doves."

MR. NIXON emphasized that Agnew never "just sat there as a yes man" in the Cabinet meetings. Other participants can testify that

the former Maryland governor has, indeed, spoken up in opposition to the President. Early last year, for instance, they differed sharply over the scope of the revenue-sharing program.

Mr. Nixon first proposed a small-scale model, after listening to advisers who warned that a big one would dangerously unbalance the budget. But Agnew argued that it must be more than double the original figure.

"You can't sell a token program to the governors and the mayors," he declared. "If you really mean business, not a well-advertised piece of tokenism, you will have to go up to \$5 billion."

Today, the revenue-sharing bill, which has passed the House and is nearing approval in the Senate, calls for \$5 billion the first year and about \$30 billion over the next five years, or roughly the Agnew figure.

LAST OCTOBER, when efforts were being made to kick Agnew upstairs to a Supreme Court vacancy, and thus clear the way for someone else on the 1972 ticket, the Vice President scornfully rejected that scheme.

"I have no interest in the Supreme Court," he said. "It would be awfully confining—not enough action. I like to be in the crucible."

It is "in the crucible" that the fire is the hottest, and Mr. Nixon has used this same figure of speech in discussing his own political trials. "My steel was hardened in the fire years ago in the Hiss case," the President once told a friend. When Mr. Nixon started exposing Alger Hiss, the State Department official later imprisoned for perjury, he said, "ninety per cent of the press was against me. Later, my critics looked sheepish. They came to admit I was right."

"I learned the hard way," the President told his friend, "that you must keep your poise, keep cool."

So, there you have the Republican ticket: Mr. Nixon and Agnew, a couple of "cool cats."