

Won't Act On Agnew Note to Hill

By Richard L. Lyons
Washington Post Staff Writer

Speaker Carl Albert rejected yesterday Vice President Agnew's request for a House investigation of criminal charges swirling around him on grounds that the House should not interfere with matters before the courts.

This setback for Agnew, who had hoped a House inquiry would clear him, came less than 24 hours before the Justice Department is scheduled to begin presenting its evidence of bribery and kickbacks allegedly involving the Vice President to a federal grand jury in Baltimore today.

Agnew's lawyers did not appear in federal court there yesterday as expected to try to stop the grand jury investigation on grounds that the constitutional separation of powers doctrine bars indictment of a vice president while he holds office. They may do so today.

Meanwhile, Agnew denied a White House statement that he and President Nixon had discussed the possibility of Agnew resigning at their meeting Tuesday.

"The President and I have not discussed that possibility," Agnew told newsmen. "I want to make it very clear that I am not resigning."

Albert read the following statement to newsmen and refused to elaborate on it:

"The Vice President's letter [requesting a House inquiry] relates to matters before the courts. In view of that fact, I, as speaker, will not take any action on the letter at this time."

Members with whom Albert consulted interpreted this to mean that Albert would oppose the House injecting itself into the case unless the courts should rule they lack the power to try an incumbent Vice President. And it was generally

agreed that as leader of the party that controls the House, Albert has the power to make his decision stick.

Albert made his decision after meeting late Tuesday and again yesterday morning with other House Democratic leaders and with Rep. Peter Rodino (D-N.J.), chairman of the House Judiciary Committee.

All reportedly agreed from the start of their discussions that the House should do nothing that would, in Rodino's words,

See AGNEW, A14, Col. 1