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James Reston Reports

The Confusion on Agnew

By James Reston [illegible]

Washington [illegible]

The [illegible] the Nixon [illegible] over Vice [illegible] Agnew [illegible] by the [illegible] which [illegible] pose [illegible] seem to be [illegible] the confusion [illegible]

Consider the [illegible] dent Nixon [illegible] the executive branch [illegible] the government [illegible]

Analysis and Opinion

[illegible] eral that Agnew is being investigated on [illegible] extortion, [illegible] evasion and [illegible] and these charges [illegible] presented to a federal grand jury in Baltimore [illegible]

LEAKS

All this is made [illegible] the source of the information is still obscure, but the vice president maintains that he is innocent, that he will not resign even if indicted, that he is the victim of a "malicious, [illegible] and illegal" attack against him by prosecutors of his own administration, and he puts the finger on Henry Petersen, head of the Criminal Division at Justice, as the source of the leak.

So what does the President do about this [illegible] row within his own political family? He doesn't settle it but confuses it. He supports the vice president's right to the presumption of innocence. He says it is "altogether [illegible] [illegible] president [illegible] even [illegible] that [illegible] de[illegible] th[illegible] w[illegible]

[illegible] the [illegible] and the [illegible] [illegible]

COURTS

[illegible] are the courts [illegible] [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the President said he [illegible] [illegible] unless you [illegible] that both the vice president and the Justice Department [illegible] [illegible]

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the judiciary [illegible] U.S. District Judge Walter E. Hoffman [illegible] attorneys [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] testimony under oath about who within the Nixon administration is responsible for leaking information detrimental to their colleague Agnew [illegible]

This raises [illegible] questions [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] questions [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

[illegible] a committee interrogation [illegible] the "dirty tricks" of the 1972 presidential election to an interrogation by Agnew or his lawyers of his colleagues in the Justice Department [illegible]

Is Petersen or even Richardson to be put on the stand under oath to swear that they didn't try to de[illegible] [illegible] own vice pres[illegible] [illegible] about men [illegible] White House [illegible] [illegible] suspected of leak[illegible] [illegible]

There is also in this [illegible] [illegible] the awkward situation of summoning the [illegible] magazine and television reporters who [illegible] the leaks, for they [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

[illegible] [illegible] asked the vice president to resign and has not even thought about [illegible] him to replace him.

[illegible] later seems a little [illegible] under the circumstances, but the family feud goes on, and perpetuates the doubts about the integrity of the American political system which the President proclaims he is trying to remove.

Already the nation is involved in more than a dozen investigations, court cases, grand jury investigations and interparty squabbles, all of them unavoidable on the evidence, so who needs new avoidable rows within the administration?

PROBLEM

The problem for the moment seems to be that everybody is looking out for his own hide, and seems willing to leave the country in a scrape rather than to risk any chance of being in a scrape himself.

There are many problems the President cannot relieve these days merely by getting a few people together in a room and talking sense, but the present family argument would not seem to be one of them, and so far there is no evidence that he has even asked Agnew, Richardson and Petersen over to the White House for a quiet talk together about their common dilemma.