

Agnew Departure Jolts

By Peter A. Jay

Washington Post Staff Writer

Marylanders, including many who campaigned for and against Spiro T. Agnew as he rose from a position on a suburban Baltimore zoning board to the vice presidency of the United States, received the news of his resignation yesterday with shock, dismay and even a sense of betrayal.

In Greek neighborhoods in Baltimore where Agnew grew up there was sorrow that a man whose political successes had given old neighbors so much pride had left his high office in disgrace, accepting without contest a verdict of guilty to charges of tax evasion, a \$10,000 fine and a suspended three-year prison term.

Here and there across the state there was rage—not so much at Agnew as at President Nixon, whom many Marylanders saw as being in some way responsible for the plight of the Vice President, their former governor.

Maryland Gov. Marvin Mandel, who became governor after Agnew was elected Vice President, said that Agnew's decision to resign "took courage and determination."

Agnew, Mandel said, "placed the stability of the nation, the integrity of the vice presidency and the security of his family above a political future."

Thomas Hunter Lowe, the former Democratic speaker of the Maryland House of Delegates who was sworn in this week as a judge on the state Court of Special Appeals, said he was "really shaken" by the news of Agnew's resignation.

"If it's true, if he took

cold payoffs, it means a hell of a lot of people had a hell of a lot of misplaced faith. I would have damn near staked my life on his innocence. The comment I've heard around here (Easton, on Maryland's Eastern Shore) is that it's a shame it wasn't Nixon," Lowe said.

"Agnew was the rock upon which this whole administration has been stabilized."

In the Highlandtown area of Baltimore, a Greek working-class area, there was gloom. Agnew, whose immigrant father changed his name from Anagnostopoulos, is still admired by Greek-Americans, and there was resentment at his resignation.

At Spiro A's Princess Cafe, owned and operated by Spiro S. Asimenior, Spiro Agnew's predicament took conversational precedence over that of the Baltimore Orioles, who at that point were trailing in their playoff game with Oakland.

"I think he was forced into it," said proprietor Asimenior. "The pressure of the news media and the TV convicted him before he was even charged."

"Nixon put the pressure on him," said Jim Sieling, a patron, as he sipped a beer. "There was no sign of them investigating Agnew until Nixon got into trouble with Watergate. Now with Spiro in trouble, you don't even hear about Watergate."

Sieling suggested that Agnew should run against Mandel. "He could probably be governor, even if he is on probation," he said.

Maryland's two Republican U.S. senators, J. Glenn Beall Jr. and Charles McC.

Mathias, had little to say about Agnew.

Beall, whose brother, George Beall, is the U.S. attorney in Baltimore who headed the investigation of Agnew and other political figures, said he was "saddened" by the resignation.

Mathias, who has frequently been at odds with Agnew and the Nixon administration, had no public comment.

Some GOP congressmen, however, were not so reticent. Maryland Rep. Lawrence J. Hogan, who had supported Agnew's unsuccessful request that the House of Representatives hear his case (and thereby delay court proceedings), said he was "stunned, dumbfounded."

"A number of us who responded to (Agnew's) request for a House hearing are out on a limb that he's just sawed off," Hogan said. "But you can't blame the man: His own situation has to be paramount."

Rep. Robert Bauman, who won an upset victory in a special election last August that he attributed in part to Agnew's campaigning on his behalf, said he was "highly surprised. I took him at his word on his previous statements."

Bauman noted that Agnew's plea of *nolo contendere*, or no contest, to federal charges that he evaded payment of \$13,551.47 in income taxes for 1967 (while he was governor) was "for all intents and purposes the same as a guilty plea."

Reps. Gilbert Gude and Marjorie Holt, both Maryland Republicans, said they were "shocked" at Agnew's

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resignation. Gov. Linwood Holton of Virginia said he was "sorry."

In Towson, where Agnew practiced law and served as Baltimore County executive before he was elected governor in 1966, reaction ranged from the somber to the philosophical.

Ken Smith, Agnew's barber, declared that "everyone here thinks this is just Nixon's trick to get (former Treasury Secretary John) Connally in as vice president."

Lawyers in Agnew's old firm weren't talking, but William J. Bregle, the manager of a Towson men's clothing store, said he was an old Kiwanis friend of the ice President and was sure Agnew would be welcomed back.

"He's a fine man. This doesn't change my feelings about him," Bregle said. "It's just one of those things that crop up in political life"

That's particularly true in Towson. Agnew's successor as county executive, Dale Anderson, has been indicted by the same federal grand jury in Baltimore on more than 40 counts of bribery, extortion and tax evasion.

Two other former Towson lawyers and public figures, former House Speaker A. Gordon Boone and former U.S. Sen. Daniel B. Brewster, both Democrats, have been convicted of federal crimes committed while in office. Boone served one year in jail. Brewster is still free on appeal.

Bruce Longbottom, a Towson insurance man, said that Agnew's "was another Horatio Alger story. He always fought for what he thought

was right, and we admired that. I guess they just had the goods on him, otherwise I don't think he would have given in."

George P. Mahoney, the perennial Democratic contender for high office in Maryland whom Agnew narrowly defeated in 1966 to become governor, was one of the small number of people interviewed who said he wasn't surprised.

"No, it doesn't strike me as a great surprise," said Mahoney, now the head of Maryland's lottery commission. "All these things were done in our very own town and I don't accept it as a surprise."

"Why, in 1966 he called me a bigot and a racist, all those outrageous dirty tricks, none of it was true what he said about me in the campaign. It was worse than the dirty tricks used in the Watergate, and he never apologized to me after it was over."

Other reactions varied. Leroy Busa, 48, an engineer from Springfield, Va., said he thought Agnew "got off lightly." He voted for the Nixon ticket in 1968 and 1972, he said, but would have "very serious doubts" about voting for a Republican in 1976.

At Tom's Bar, a Baltimore tavern, Anthony E. Gallagher said he was "100 per cent for Agnew." Gallagher said he is an active Democrat, and thinks Agnew was trapped by the President. "I think Nixon set him up," Gallagher said. "I think he should have fought it" and not resigned.