

10/12/73 W Post

Rapid Choice Seen

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President Nixon went to his Camp David retreat last night to ponder the choice of a new Vice President, with White House associates saying he would not be swayed by the rising demand from Capitol Hill Democrats for a "caretaker" appointment.

The announcement of a success to Spiro T. Agnew is possible this weekend and will come no later than early next week, presidential aides told Carroll Kilpatrick, The Washington Post's White House correspondent. But there was no indication Mr. Nixon has made his choice.

During the day, the favorite's role in the feverish speculation shifted from former Texas Gov. John B. Connally to New York Gov. Nelson A. Rockefeller.

Connally encountered a bipartisan barrage of criticism in the House and Senate, including some predictions that he would fail to win the necessary majority vote for confirmation. Rockefeller, on the other hand, drew strong support from his fellow governors and appeared able to escape a veto from either conservative Republicans who opposed his past bids for the GOP presidential nomination or Democrats fearful that he would be a tough opponent to beat in 1976. The 65-year-old Rockefeller, who bowed to Mr. Nixon in the 1960 and 1968 races, said in Washington that he had "not been requested by anyone to consider" the Agnew vacancy. But he and his top aides both made plain he would accept the bid from Mr. Nixon if it came—reversing his stand at the 1960 convention.

The Democratic sentiment on Capitol Hill for the naming of a man without 1976 presidential aspirations appeared to be focused primarily against Connally, a

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recent convert from Democratic ranks to the Republican Party.

House Majority Leader Thomas P. O'Neill Jr. (D-Mass.) reported that at a meeting of the Democratic whips in the House yesterday morning, the leaders were "adamant" against Connally, some describing him as "a traitor and a doublecrosser" to the party.

Another prominent Democrat, Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr. of North Carolina, said of Connally: "A lot of Democrats think he should have stayed in our party and

helped those who express similar views. I think some Republicans think they ought not to give such a high position to a recent convert who has not borne the burden and felt the heat of the day."

Gov. Daniel Evans (R-Wash.), while praising Connally's abilities, summed up the view of those Republicans who favor someone else. "I frankly think in a party as big and as varied as ours," he said, "I'd hate to have to see us turn to someone who has so recently discovered its virtues. There are many others of equal capacity who ought to get prior consideration."

Republican members of the House and Senate reported they had been told in party caucuses that they were free not only to advise the President who they wanted, but who they didn't. Several said they were taking the opportunity to express their opposition to Connally.

The backing for Rockefeller among his fellow state executives was impressive, with Evans, current chairman of the National Governors' Conference, calling him "uniquely qualified" on both foreign and domestic problems.

Evans said he had indication that as many as 16 of the 19 GOP state executives favored Rockefeller, with the others leaning to California Gov. Ronald Reagan. Leading California Republicans expressed strong doubts that Reagan would be picked by the President.

Publicly expressed support for Rockefeller ranged from liberals like Oregon Gov. Tom McCall, who called Rockefeller "the equivalent of a President in administrative experience and in his command of the respect of the people," to conservatives like Tennessee Gov. Winfield Dunn, who said Rockefeller is "without peer as a prospective appointee for this position."

The President carried with him to Camp David suggestions from more than 300 Republican officeholders and party officials on a new Vice President, submitted in response to a White House request.

The suggestions ranged

from early favorites Connally and Rockefeller to such dark horses as Chief Justice Warren E. Burger and Deputy Attorney General William D. Ruckelshaus, according to presidential counselor Anne Armstrong.

There was a wave of support from House Republicans for Minority Leader Gerald R. Ford (R-Mich.), who was reported by friends to be eager for the appointment.

But current White House aides agreed with former communications director Herbert G. Klein, who said in California that the President "will not make the decision on a head count."

Mr. Nixon went to his mountain retreat accompanied only by a military aide, but some staff members said they were beginning a "system ATK analysis" of the suggestions for his use if he desires.

There was some disagreement within the President's closest circle of advisers on the emphasis he would place on the 1976 aspect of his choice. A ranking official, who declined to be quoted by name, said Mr. Nixon "will not name a man on the basis that he will be the best candidate in 1976. His intention is to name a good man, but it may be someone who won't run in '76."

But domestic adviser Melvin R. Laird said the President is determined to see "that with the 22d Amendment [the two term President limit] in effect, Congress doesn't use the 25th Amendment [for vice presidential replacement] to make the Vice President a lame duck, too."

Laird predicted that the person picked will be "someone who has both the qualifications to be President and the desire to be President." He said the executive branch could not function well with both its top officials barred from running in the next election.

Mrs. Armstrong, while less categorical than Laird in predicting that the President would pick a 1976 contender, said flatly that the

efforts of some congressional Democrats to bar the new Vice President from running, "will not prevail."

"In a time of crisis like this," she said, "public opinion would marshal against any members of Congress who would reject a qualified person just because he might be a candidate in 1976."

"It's a bluff," Mrs. Armstrong declared, "and the President won't be bluffed."

The word from the White House that the President would not be influenced by the demand of some congressional Democrats for a "caretaker" appointment was buttressed by sentiments from other Republicans that such a demand could backfire politically on the Democrats.

"This idea that you can have some doddering nincompoop caretaker in there when America is on her death bed, when the President could fall in a day, is nonsense," Gov. McCall said.

Klein said the nomination of a clearly qualified man who also was a 1976 possibility would be difficult for the Democratic-controlled Congress to reject "if criticism is on the basis of politics rather than qualifications."

A ranking House Democrat acknowledged the point. "I think in the end the House would be very hardpressed not to put its stamp of approval on someone of good reputation who is nominated in proper fashion," he said. "There's a lot of huffing and puffing on this, but I don't know how we could turn down a Rockefeller, say."

Further supporting the President's coolness to a caretaker choice was an NBC News poll that indicated 93 per cent of 530 individuals contacted by telephone by pollster Oliver Quayle since Agnew's resignation rejected the idea that Mr. Nixon ought to pick a replacement who would not be a candidate for President in 1976.

A check of Republican leaders around the country who had been invited to submit their recommendations to the President indicated a strong preference for Connally and Reagan in the South, and favorite-son balloting from a number of states. Texas Republicans were backing Connally and Californians Reagan.

Other names going to the



GOV. N. A. ROCKEFELLER
... now the frontrunner

White House included Sen. Barry M. Goldwater (R-Ariz.), who was said to be willing but not eager; White House adviser Laird associate justices of the Supreme Court Potter Stewart and Byron R. White; Sen. Edward W. Brooke (R-Mass.); Mayor Richard Lugar of Indianapolis; Gov. Thomas J. Meskill (R-Conn.); Sen. Lowell P. Weicker (R-Conn.); Senate Minority Leader Hugh Scott; Gov. Arch A. Moore Jr. (R-W. Va.); Gov. William G. Milliken (R-Mich.), and Secretary of the Treasury George P. Shultz.

One Republican state chairman, Jack Speight of Wyoming, said he would not

submit any recommendations to the President because "it is utterly absurd for a Republican state chairman in Wyoming to be telling people in Washington whom to pick for Vice President. All we want is for the appointment to be confirmed as quickly as possible and get on with the job."

Although there were plenty of names in the pot, and much rhetoric about them, there appeared to be a general disposition within the Republican Party to accept the President's eventual choice. Clarke Reed of Mississippi, chairman of the Southern Republican state chairmen, said: "I wouldn't holler about anybody the President chose. Across the South, the choices would be mostly Reagan and Goldwater, but that's a philosophical thing. Party people know the presidential candidate has always picked his running mate, and he'll be given that privilege now."

Mrs. Armstrong said that "polarization in the GOP is minimal. Southern leaders say it's Reagan and Connally in their area, but even if it were Rocky, there would be no breaks that weren't reconcilable."

There was some concern at the White House that the process of semi-public suggestions, encouraged by the President, could have the effect of narrowing his op-

tions. Laird said, "The sooner the President comes down with his choice, the better. Otherwise, you'll get more of an organized campaign for individuals, which isn't helpful to the process."

In an effort to avoid open bickering among Republicans, the party's national committee reportedly asked those who have been mentioned as possible choices to stay off the television interview shows until the President acts.

The canvass of Republican opinion extended to some of the party's big contributors. Chicago insurance executive W. Clement Stone, who had created a legal defense fund for Agnew, said Mrs. Armstrong asked for his suggestions on a replacement. He said he put Connally at the top of his list "because his philosophies are, in my opinion, closest to those of the President."

Two House Democrats raised the possibility that the President's Watergate troubles might be injected into the vice presidential confirmation.

Reps. Wright Patman (D-Tex.), dean of the House, and Jerome R. Waldie (R-Calif.) both called on Mr. Nixon to submit along with his vice presidential recommendation the tapes of Oval Office conversations sought in the Watergate investigation.