Agnew Blasts Version of Resignation

By Jack Anderson

Former Vice President Spiro Agnew is trying to rewrite the history of his downfall.

He has fired off a bristling protest to World Book encyclopedia over its account of his forced resignation.

The respected encyclopedia factually reported in its 1974 yearbook that Agnew resigned the vice presidency last October after having pleaded "no contest" to charges of income tax evasion.

"In return for Agnew's resignation and no-contest plea to the tax-evasion charge," reported World Book, "the government agreed not to prosecute him for alleged acts of extortion and bribery. . . .

"In a 40-page exposition of evidence, the government alleged that shortly after his election as executive of Baltimore County in 1962, Agnew began and directed a complex scheme to extort thousands of dollars from consulting engineers in Maryland. In return, he allegedly granted them profitable government contracts.

"Allegedly, Agnew continued to operate the kickback scheme from 1962 through his two years as governor of Maryland and during his first four years as Vice President."

The encyclopedia stressed that Agnew "denied that he was guilty. He said that accepting 'contributions' while governor of Maryland was 'part of a long-established pattern' of political fund-raising in the state."

This history of Agnew's fall from power, although quite accurate, displeased the former Vice President. Angrily, he sent back his copy of the yearbook and demanded in an accompanying letter that the Agnew name be removed from the firm's mailing list.

World Book officials refused to show us the Agnew letter, claiming it would be a "breach of confidence." Sources who have seen it, however, told us Agnew claimed the yearbook article was a distortion of the truth.

He complained that he had been persecuted, that he had been found guilty of nothing. The entire case against him, he charged, was built upon the testimony of tainted men.

The encyclopedia's account, added Agnew, reflected a leftist bias. It was a trait he found all too common in the nation's news media, he protested.

One source who saw the letter told us it was "very personal" and showed Agnew has a sour opinion of the press.

World Book's summary of the Agnew affair went to press before Maryland judges ruled that he should be disbarred. The courts, apparently, agree with World Book.

Footnote: The former Vice President, who is traveling in Greece, couldn't be reached for comment.

OIL RIP-OFF—The big oil companies have demanded higher and higher gasoline prices to stimulate domestic production and to reduce U.S. dependence upon foreign imports.

But a confidential study by Sen. Jim Abourezk (D-S.D.,) reveals that the excess profits have been going not into new oil wells but into the pockets of the oil barons.

The senator has discovered that domestic oil production has gone down, not up, since prices began soaring. Far from encouraging greater production, his figures show, there has been a "total decline of 314,000 barrels per day" since May, 1973, before the crisis.

By holding back on domestic crude oil, the companies have kept the demand—and, therefore, the prices—sky high.

Curtailing production also permits the oil companies to adjust their profit level. When the public screams about exorbitant oil profits, the companies merely lower production. This reduces profits without losing them, since the oil remains in the ground for later sale at Pikes Peak prices.

The Abourezk study shows that the cutback in oil production was most severe last November at the same time that the oil firms were calling for higher prices to encourage more production.

The biggest firms were the worst offenders. Exxon, Texaco, Shell, Gulf, Mobil and Standard of California alone accounted for a production drop of 153,000 barrels a day in 1973.

Nor have the oil companies been candid about prices. In 1972, the pro-industry National Petroleum Council said the oil firms would be able to turn a good profit on oil in 1975 at $3.54 to $3.70 a barrel.

Yet two years ahead of the prediction, the oil industry not only has surpassed but has doubled this price, with oil now selling at more than $7 a barrel. The promised exploration to ease the energy crisis, meanwhile, still hasn't taken place.

Based on his study, Abourezk plans to introduce a bill this week to force a roll-back in domestic crude prices to May, 1973. He will be joined by other senators, who would permit price increases only if the companies could prove higher production costs.