

Agnew to hold plea bargaining papers

F Post 4/3/76

CROFTON, Md. (AP) — Spiro T. Agnew said Friday he has read the transcript of the plea-bargaining sessions between his lawyers and government prosecutors that resulted in his resignation as vice president and has decided not to release them at this time.

"Very recently, I read the transcripts at the Federal Judicial Center in Washington," the former vice president told The Associated Press. "The transcripts contain no information which is not already known and which has not been fully discussed by the news media."

Agnew said he could see "no useful purpose in consenting to release of the transcripts at this time."

But he said he plans to write his memoirs in a few years, "which will go deeply into the entire matter. At the time the memoir is published, I will remove my objections to the release of the transcript so they can become a part of the total documentation of the matter."

Agnew said he might even include the entire transcript as an appendix to his memoirs.

When the question of releasing the transcript first arose some months ago, Agnew said he himself had never seen it. He said since he was not at the plea-bargaining sessions, he did not want anything released until he at least had a chance to read the transcript.

"Inasmuch as I was not personally present during the conversations, I naturally wanted to see what was said before consenting to the release," Agnew said. "Therefore, I agreed to pay half of the cost of having the reporters' notes transcribed so that I could make a determination of whether any useful purpose would be served" in releasing them.

U.S. District Court Judge Walter E. Hoffman, before whom Agnew pleaded

no contest to a single count of income tax evasion, has said from the beginning that he considered himself bound by an agreement not to release the plea-bargaining transcript unless both the government and Agnew consented. Federal prosecutors said at the time newsmen asked to see the transcript that they had no objections to its release.

Agnew said his attorney, Judah Best, had received a letter dated March 29 from Judge Hoffman in which Hoffman seemed to agree with the former vice president's assessment of the transcript.

"I think the counsel and the court are in substantial agreement that the transcripts reveal nothing which has not already been disclosed," Hoffman wrote Best.

Agnew termed the plea-bargaining sessions "leisurely discussions. They ramble on and on and rather than have them released in part by some hostile parties, I just feel it's better to wait and release the whole thing as an entity," he said.