

Endorsement NYT 4/27/73

There are some endorsements a man would rather not have. To mere outsiders, Vice President Agnew's words of praise for President Nixon in the Watergate case look very much as if they might fall in that dubious category.

"I want to make it very clear that I have full confidence in the integrity of President Nixon," the Vice President told the press in a brief statement.

Since the President through his deputy press secretary a few days earlier had denied any prior knowledge of the Watergate affair, he can hardly have enjoyed hearing the Vice President endorse his integrity as if it were in need of a testimonial. Mr. Nixon may also have felt just a little bit patronized when Mr. Agnew went on to express confidence in the President's "determination and ability to resolve the Watergate matter."

After all, a year ago it was Mr. Nixon who was coolly appraising Mr. Agnew's capacities and deciding whether to keep him on the ticket or replace him with former Secretary of the Treasury John Connally. Mr. Agnew the other day may have been loyally reciprocating the President's decision in his favor last year—or he may have been settling a score by subtly denigrating his chief while ostensibly supporting him.

The Vice President's past and present aides have made no secret of their low opinion of Mr. Nixon's handling of the Watergate scandal. Mr. Agnew disassociated

himself from those criticisms but in the process called attention to them.

All in all, it is a mysterious little footnote to the larger mystery of Watergate.