

Agnew Role Unsure But He Stays Loyal

By Lou Cannon

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Spiro Agnew declared firmly yesterday that he is still the President's man but said he has often been frustrated by the vice presidency and is uncertain of his role in the second Nixon Administration.

"Quite candidly, the President hasn't defined my role yet," Agnew said. "I don't know exactly what I'll be doing and its up to the President to define it."

In a wide-ranging interview the Vice President also speculated that the Watergate bugging case "could be harmful" to him if he becomes a presidential candidate despite his own lack of personal involvement. Agnew said that the issue would be a liability for Re-

publican candidates in 1974 and 1976 if the political espionage questions are not "quickly resolved in the public mind" by the present legal proceedings.

Agnew also reaffirmed his belief that Mr. Nixon was not personally involved in the Watergate case, and he criticized the Senate Select Committee headed by Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr. (D-N.C.) for preceeding with hearings before the grand jury "has completed the indictment process."

Two themes dominated the Vice President's responses to a variety of questions—his personal loyalty to the President whether he's

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"riding high or under attack" and the uncertainty about his role would be during the remainder of Mr. Nixon's term.

On May 2, two days after the resignation of the President's top aides because of the widening Watergate scandal, the White House announced that Agnew would be given new duties as the vice chairman of the Domestic Council.

But the President has been spelled out what the changes will entail, and since last week passed up an official address to some of the major news organizations in New York.

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SPIRO T. AGNEW

undecided on candidacy

responsibility to an advisory responsibility and it's hard to make it really is.

In the past year that I was Vice President I would find myself saying, well, now we are going to do this, and then I would come back and say, we're not going to do anything, we're going to ask the President if it's not a good idea to do this." Agnew recalled that the vice presidency has its frustrations and it's a tremendous adjustment for someone who has been a single executive.

Asked if his situation was analogous to Robert Kennedy's in the last years of the Johnson administration, Agnew said, "Unfortunately, I don't think so. I was not being too far from the center of the action and for that I feel I was in a better position to understand what a broad view was.

"This is a very difficult problem that all vice presidents that may become presidential candidates are faced with, and I don't think there is any good answer," he said.

Agnew said he has reached no decision about his candidacy but would not run for President unless it appeared he could win.

"I can assure you of this that if I go after the nomination it will be because I think I can get it, and once having achieved it that I think I can be elected," he said. "I'm not going to go after any nomination unless I can get it."

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In a copyrighted interview with U.S. News and World Report last month, Agnew was somewhat more positive about his chances. He said then that "if I decide to do it, I'll run to win and I can win."

Discussing other Republicans Agnew said yesterday that former Treasury Secretary John Connally had "certainly put himself in a position where he can begin to become a formidable prospect."

Agnew also said that California Gov. Ronald Reagan and New York Gov. Nelson Rockefeller must be considered "factors" in the Republican competition for President.

Watergate's effect on either the mid-term elections of 1974 or the 1976 presidential elections will depend upon how quickly "all of the information" is made public.

"If it comes out expeditiously, I would think that the possibility of the effect on the election would be rather diminished," Agnew said. "If it's stretched out into a continuing chain of accusation and rumor that has not been determined judicially and is still hanging like at the time of the election it's got to have an adverse effect."

Agnew said he would "revivise a situation where it is still hanging over a target in 1975 in some way."

Agnew said he can see the possibility in some circumstances in which (Watergate) could go beyond and certain some people might have been in certain circumstances in which it could be helpful.

How could it be helped, he was asked.

"The mere fact that I have announced my candidacy is a help according to some," Agnew replied. "I don't share that view but I think that if I had any effect it would be a positive effect that would have to be overcome."

Agnew proclaimed repeatedly during the interview that he was "not a political man."

described himself in his acceptance speech at the 1972 Republican convention.

Recently, Agnew told the Harvard Republican Club that he would resign his office if he found himself in disagreement with the President on a matter of conscience. He said yesterday he did not envision such a disagreement.

"I still cannot see myself actively going out and opposing a presidential policy as long as I sit in this office," Agnew said. "I don't think that's what the Vice President is intended to do."

"He would not be Vice President but for the selection of the President and having accepted the job on those terms he should not let his personal ambitions propel him..." Agnew said.

The Vice President said that he hoped that as the President's term neared the end he would have "more freedom based on the fact that the President usually does not engage in the program of detailed and important programs at that time, which places you in a position to become more flexible."

He said he would not concern himself with any circumstances that would cause President Nixon to step down because of the Watergate case.

"It is impossible to make such a prediction and I'm not really willing to engage in any speculation because I have no knowledge of any circumstances that would remotely lead to such a consideration," he said.

He said he did not believe that the administration had been rendered unable to govern because of Watergate or that it's efforts with Congress had been impeded.

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