

Mr. Agnew's Future

In 1956 Richard M. Nixon wanted very much to be renominated as Vice President, but influential advisers to President Eisenhower thought a less controversial running mate would be preferable. After a period of uncertainty, President Eisenhower decided against forcing a change. When he told Mr. Nixon to "chart his own course," there was no doubt what that course would be.

This chapter in his own political history must often come to Mr. Nixon's mind now that he occupies the seat of power and Vice President Agnew the hot seat of uncertainty. Although at times Mr. Agnew professes indifference to his future in national politics and hints that he might retire to make money in private business, the Vice Presidency is a prize not easily relinquished. The lack of substantive power in the job can be stultifying, but its potential as an access point to the Presidency is alluring. In 1968, both major party nominees—Mr. Nixon and Mr. Humphrey—had served as Vice President. The post is no longer the political blind alley it once was.

Since John Connally, fresh out of the Treasury, appears to be his chief rival, Mr. Agnew seemed to be mounting a strong public counterattack the other day when he told reporters he considers it inconceivable that a Republican National Convention would nominate the Texas Democrat for Vice President.

John Mitchell, the President's campaign manager and political *alter ego*, promptly contradicted Mr. Agnew. He pointed out the simple truth that, if a President wants to choose a new running mate, he can find a way to do it. According to Mr. Mitchell, the Vice Presidency is "an open question."

Mr. Connally is closing no doors. He has definitely avoided saying that he would refuse a Vice-Presidential offer from Mr. Nixon. He has always impressed observers as a man who would like to be President. Since it is highly unlikely that the Democratic party would ever nominate him, the G.O.P. offers the only route to the White House.

Aside from the President's admiration for his executive energy and political judgment, Mr. Connally has a further asset in that he could help materially in carrying Texas in November, an accomplishment which has twice narrowly eluded Mr. Nixon. There are no other rivals from a major state whose political credentials look as promising.

•Mr. Agnew's future may turn on what Gov. George C. Wallace decides to do about a third-party candidacy. President Nixon chose Mr. Agnew four years ago because he wanted a border state Southerner with an ethnic background who could compete with Mr. Wallace for border state and "hardhat" votes. The decision paid off because Mr. Agnew proved a popular, effective campaigner in much of the South. In the last three years Mr. Agnew's hard-hitting right-wing speeches have consolidated his support among G.O.P. conservatives generally and with many Southerners specifically.

Insofar as Governor Wallace's appeal overlaps that of Mr. Agnew, an independent Wallace candidacy might well tip the balance in favor of the Vice President's renomination. As Mr. Nixon well knows, by such uncontrollable events are men's careers determined in national politics.