

White House Is Silent on Agnew

Washington

The White House yesterday refused to comment on reports that Vice President Agnew would resign and declined to respond to questions about whether President Nixon still supports him.

Agnew, although cheered by telephone calls and telegrams that urged him not to resign, also declined to comment on reports that he would step down. A spokesman for the Vice President said Agnew may have discussed the possibility of resigning and that his "dark mood" may have been "misinterpreted" by some people.

"It's possible that anyone who has been through what the Vice President has been through may have reflected his condition in somber terms and given someone the impression that his mood was more forlorn than it appeared to be," said J. Marsh Thomson, the Vice President's press secretary.

"It's entirely understandable that an individual who is not able to see the whole screen of the Vice Presi-

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dent's attitude would get an exaggerated opinion of the weight he is giving to the option of resigning," Thomson said.

Agnew met newsmen as he was leaving a luncheon that he was giving for visiting Pakistani Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. The Vice President was asked to comment on a story in the Washington Post that quoted a senior Republican figure as saying he was "99½ per cent certain" that Agnew would resign "and probably this week."

"Gentlemen, as you know it is my practice not to comment on stories from undisclosed sources," Agnew said. Then he got into his waiting limousine and left.

SPECULATION

The White House declined to comment in any way on the report that the vice president has considered resign-

ing, adding to speculation that relations between the President and Agnew are strained.

White House spokesman Gerald L. Warren faced a barrage of questions, and replied to all that he would not comment on the Agnew matter in any way.

Warren said he has discussed the matter with the President and that the President was aware of the Washington Post report about the vice president.

However, no one at the White House would say even privately that the story about Agnew's impending resignation was untrue. Some Republicans close to Agnew, speaking on a not-for-attribution basis, said that they feared that the White House itself was responsible for stories that the vice president would quit.

'ABSURDITY'

Agnew's former press secretary, Vic Gold, described the story as "an absurdity."

In an interview with United Press International, Gold attributed the story to "half a dozen people working for the White House" and added:

"It is the White House in my opinion that is out to serve the vice president up like John the Baptist, except the vice president is not going to be served."

The President and Vice President conferred at length at the White House on September 1, and that is the last time they have met privately, Warren said. Agnew attended a cabinet meeting September 7 and stood in a reception line with the President September 10 at a reception for members of the Republican national committee. He and Mrs. Agnew also were on the guest list for last night's state dinner for Pakistan's prime minister

and Mrs. Bhutto.

CALLS

Thomson, the vice president's press secretary, said initial reaction to the story was favorable to Agnew. Twenty telephone calls and 32 of the first 35 telegrams urged Agnew not to resign, Thomson said.

Agnew was deluged with favorable letters, telegrams and calls after an August 8 news conference in which he acknowledged that he was under investigation for possible violation of bribery, tax fraud, extortion and conspiracy laws. At the time, he was asked: "If the investigations should progress and get more serious, even though you consider yourself innocent, might you consider stepping down to protect public confidence?"

"Let me say right now that I have no expectation of being indicted," Agnew replied. "And I'm not going to face any contingent thinking in that respect at this time."

However, Agnew discussed the possibility of resignation only eight days later when he met privately with Republican leaders in Colorado while on a speaking trip. The day after Mr. Nixon's Watergate speech, Agnew met with the GOP leaders, who agreed not to discuss the issue with the press.

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