

Nixon Aide's Advice to Lawmakers on Agnew

Washington

The Nixon administration cautioned some key Republican members of Congress against making hasty public statements about Vice President Spiro T. Agnew after it was revealed that criminal charges were being considered against him, government sources said yesterday.

The admonitions were delivered by telephone calls and one government official said it was understandable such calls would be made "because some Congressmen sometimes have a tendency to jump the gun."

Melvin R. Laird, President Nixon's chief White House adviser, called Representative John B. Anderson (Rep.-Ill.), chairman of the House Republican Conference with an admonition to avoid public comment after the investigation was confirmed by Agnew himself.

It was learned that Senator Robert P. Griffin (Rep.-Mich.), the assistant GOP minority leader, also received a call.

Griffin, like many other members of the Senate and House, was on vacation and not immediately available for comment.

Laird, traveling with the presidential party to the

Nixon residence in San Clemente, acknowledged to reporters that he had telephoned Anderson. However, he did not give details of the conversation other than to recall that he told Anderson to "stay loose" in commenting on the Agnew investigation. Laird did not say whether he called anyone else.

Agnew revealed August 6 that he had been informed he was under investigation for possible conspiracy, bribery, extortion and tax fraud in connection with alleged kickbacks by construction and engineering firms in Maryland. Agnew, who served as Baltimore county's chief executive and later as governor before becoming Vice President, has denied any wrongdoing.

Laird's call to Anderson was first reported by news columnists Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, who said the White House adviser had warned him "not to go all-out in defense" of Agnew, and added that the White House move had infuriated the Vice President's aides.

Anderson confirmed the call from Laird but disputed the columnist's interpretation as "not an accurate reference to Laird's motivation."

"I felt it was out of a de-

sire to keep members of the Republican party from making premature comments pending further investigation," Anderson said. "It was not out of a cabal against Agnew."

He said he believed Laird wanted Republicans to exercise caution "and not go off a deep end one way or another . . . not get out front on a matter that is still in a very tenuous state."

The fact that Mr. Nixon himself has made no public defense of Agnew has fed speculation that the White House hopes the Vice President's problems might divert attention from Watergate.

In another development, an Agnew spokesman confirmed that an aide to the Vice President made contact with Maryland Governor Marvin Mandel's office and also with George Lewis, head of the Maryland Department of General Services, last week seeking information about Maryland contractors.

The aide, identified by sources as Arthur J. Sommer, Agnew's administrative assistant, asked that state officials prepare for the Vice President a list of all public works contracts awarded from 1962 through 1972.

Frank A. DeFilippo, Mandel's press secretary, didn't say what the contracts were or for what precise purpose they were requested, but the dates span roughly the period covered by the investigation.

As governor from 1967 through 1968, Agnew was a member of the three-man Board of Public Works which awards state contracts.

Sources said some 3000 projects are involved, but about half of them were jobs under \$2500.

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