

Agnew asks House for full inquiry to vindicate him, cites Constitution; jury to get U.S. evidence tomorrow

Nixon Asks Nation To Show Fairness

By R. W. APPLE Jr.
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Sept. 25—President Nixon appealed to the American people tonight to give Vice President Agnew “the basic, decent consideration and presumption of innocence that are both his right and his due.”

At the end of a day of furious rumors, counterrumors, announcements and denials, the White House issued a 250-word written statement that consti-

Text of White House statement is printed on Page 23.

tuted Mr. Nixon's strongest endorsement of his Vice President since Mr. Agnew's legal difficulties began.

The President called the Vice President to the Oval Office this morning for an hour-and-fifteen-minute meeting. Referring to that conversation in his statement, Mr. Nixon said:

“The Vice President again, as he had done in our previous meetings, denied the charges that have been made against him.”

Mr. Agnew, the President continued, “has served his country with dedication and distinc-

tion and has won the respect of millions of Americans for the candor and courage with which he has addressed the controversial issues of our time.” Now, the President said, Mr. Agnew faces a “difficult period.”

The Vice President's struggle for political survival appeared to be heading toward a climax with Mr. Nixon's statement, a decision to send evidence to a Baltimore grand jury and Mr. Agnew's subsequent request for a Congressional investigation.

Evaluation of Inquiry

Mr. Nixon—whose assistants have been unofficially and indirectly suggesting, then officially denying, that Mr. Agnew should resign—met at 8:30 o'clock this morning with Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson and the Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Criminal Division, Henry E. Petersen, to receive an evaluation of the Agnew investigation.

Then, for the first time since the Vice President was accused of having accepted kickbacks while Governor of Maryland,

Continued on Page 23, Column 7

Nixon Appeals to Nation To Presume Innocence

Continued From Page 1, Col. 3

the President summoned him to a conference. The past Nixon-Agnew meetings have been requested by Mr. Agnew as part of his effort to cling to his office.

Gerald L. Warren, the deputy White House press secretary, disclosed the meeting at the regular morning briefing in response to questions. He had omitted any mention of it in announcing President Nixon's schedule.

Mr. Warren said Mr. Nixon and Mr. Agnew had again agreed that there would be no comment on the substance of the meeting. But almost immediately, Mr. Warren denied that the Vice President had resigned, denied that Mr. Nixon had asked him to resign and denied that anyone in the White House was pressing him to resign.

When Mr. Warren was asked, however, whether the Vice President had offered to resign, he returned to his earlier refusal to discuss what had been said.

'Deal Made'

Reporters immediately concluded that that must have been what Mr. Agnew had done, and one middle-level official said later that “the deal has been made and Agnew's through.” Late in the afternoon, the Dow-Jones News Service reported that the Vice President had indeed offered his resignation and that the Justice Department had agreed to allow him to plead guilty to one relatively minor charge.

Mr. Agnew's attorneys, Judah Best of Washington and Martin London and Jay H. Topkis of New York, had been attempting to negotiate a deal.

But no sooner had the Dow-Jones report appeared than J. Marsh Thompson, Mr. Agnew's news secretary, denied it. He reported that the Vice President was “in fine fettle—as determined and calm as I've ever seen him.” The White House, at about the same time, provided informal guidance to a number of correspondents to

stay away from the dispatch carried by Dow-Jones.

Mr. Thomson also reported that Mr. Agnew had decided to cancel a speech Wednesday in Pebble Beach, Calif., to remain on hand for consultations with his lawyers. But he said that the Vice President planned to keep another speaking date in Los Angeles Saturday before the National Federation of Republican Women.

The denials appeared to be borne out still later when Mr. Richardson issued a statement announcing that evidence against Mr. Agnew would be presented on Thursday to the Baltimore grand jury that is investigating the charges of corruption. He said the talks and negotiations with the Agnew lawyers had broken down.

It was not clear whether Mr. Richardson had sought—or received—Mr. Nixon's approval before authorizing the presentation of evidence. One usually informed White House source said, however, that that had been the purpose of their early-morning meeting today.

According to the same source, the President discussed the Agnew situation at length last night with his chief of staff, Alexander M. Haig Jr., aboard the Presidential yacht Sequoia.

Jerry Landauer, a Wall Street Journal reporter who was the author of the Dow-Jones report, refused to comment on the circumstances of its publication.

The White House staff seemed to be divided on the Agnew question, with contradictory information emanating from various offices. One reason offered by one official was the difficulty of solving the Agnew problem without bringing in the legal questions at issue in Mr. Nixon's struggle to preserve the confidentiality of the Water-gate tape recordings.

One major question in both cases is whether a President and a Vice President are subject to ordinary court proceedings or can be tried only through Congressional impeachment proceedings.

9-26-73

NYT