

What Agnew Told Court

Washington

Here is the written version of the statement by Spiro T. Agnew to the court in Baltimore:

My decision to resign and enter a plea of nolo contendere rests on my firm belief that the public interest requires swift disposition of the problems which are facing me. I am advised that a full legal defense of the probable charges against me could consume several years. I am concerned that intense media interest in the case would distract public attention from important national problems — to the country's detriment.

I am aware that witnesses are prepared to testify that I and my agents received payments from consulting engineers doing business with the state of Maryland during the period I was governor. With the exception of the admission that follows, I deny the assertions of illegal acts on my part made by the government witnesses.

I admit that I did receive payments during the year 1967 which were not expended for political purposes, and that, therefore, these payments were income taxable to me in that year and that I so knew. I further acknowledge that contracts were awarded by state agencies in 1967 and other years to those who made such payments, and that I was aware of such awards.

I am aware that government witnesses are prepared to testify that preferential treatment was accorded to the paying companies

pursuant to an understanding with me when I was the governor.

I stress, however, that no contracts were awarded to contractors who were not competent to perform the work and in most instances state contracts were awarded without any arrangement for the payment of money by the contractor.

I deny that the payments in any way influenced my official actions. I am confident, moreover, that testimony presented in my behalf would make it clear that I at no time conducted my official duties as county executive or governor of Maryland in a manner harmful to the interests of the county or state, or my duties as vice president of the United States in a manner harmful to the nation, and, further assert that my acceptance of contributions was part of a long-established pattern of political fund-raising in the state. At no time have I enriched myself at the expense of the public trust.

In all the circumstances, I have concluded that protracted proceedings before the grand jury, the Congress and the courts, with the speculation and controversy surrounding them, would seriously prejudice the national interest.

These, briefly stated, are the reasons I am entering a plea of nolo contendere to the charge that I did receive payments in 1976 which I failed to report for the purposes of income taxation.

Associated Press