

Vice President Fined for Income

By Laurence Stern
Washington Post Staff Writer

In a stunning and historic finale to his two-month public ordeal, Spiro T. Agnew resigned the vice-presidency yesterday and accepted a criminal sentence for federal tax evasion.

The sentence—three years of unsupervised probation and a \$10,000 fine—was imposed by U.S. District Court Judge Walter E. Hoffman, who called the affair “a tragic event in history.”

The resignation was accepted by President Nixon in the form of a “Dear Ted” letter which paid tribute to Agnew’s decision to resign rather than bring on “a protracted period of national division and uncertainty” through extended battle in the courts and Congress.”

The President immediately launched the search for a successor to serve out the remaining three years of his

administration. He asked Republican politicians—congressional leaders, governors, state chairmen and Republican National Committee members—to submit suggestions today.

The dramatic news of Agnew’s resignation reverberated quickly through Congress. It was received with reactions of shock and compassion.

“Everything is so unreal. I’ve got to go straighten myself out,” said Sen. Daniel K. Inouye (D-Hawaii). Republican National Chairman George Bush praised Agnew for his “great personal courage,” but said the action was “in the best interest of the country.”

In the great national guessing game over Agnew’s successor, speculation centered most heavily on former Treasury Secretary and Texas Governor John B. Connally, New York Gov. Nelson A. Rockefeller and former

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Agnew Resigns, Tax Evasion

Secretary of State William P. Rogers. The three men were non-committal on the question.

For Agnew the paramount event of the day was when he stood erect and expressionless before Judge Hoffman to enter his "no contest" plea on the tax evasion charge.

That plea, which the judge declared to be the "full equivalent of a plea of guilty," was the result of days of plea bargaining between Agnew's lawyers and top Justice Department officials.

In return for the plea and his resignation the government agreed not to prosecute Agnew for alleged acts of extortion and bribery stretching over a 10-year period and involving at least \$87,500. The charges were spelled out in a 40-page Justice Department "exposition of evidence" submitted to Judge Hoffman.

Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson defended the compromise and also asked for leniency in the sentencing

of the former Vice President. The alternative, he said, would have been prolonged trial or impeachment proceedings.

"It is unthinkable that this nation should have been required to endure the anguish and uncertainty of a prolonged period in which the man next in line of succession to the presidency was fighting the charges brought against him by his own government," Richardson said.

The Attorney General asked that Agnew not be jailed, "out of compassion for the man, out of respect for the office he has held, and out of appreciation for the fact that by his resignation he has spared the nation the prolonged agony that would have attended upon his trial."

And so Spiro Agnew became the first Vice President of the United States to be driven from office by a cloud of personal scandal.

Statements, details of charges.

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