



William S. White ^{WR} Post

Nixon's Choice? ^{9.4.71}

It Will Be S.A.

SPIRO AGNEW is rushing from smoke plume to smoke plume to put out the blazes being set off by over-zealous supporters whose determination is to light a fire under President Nixon to promise, right now, not to dump his Vice President in 1972.

Though this is certainly not the first time that a politician has wished his friends did not love him so much, the experience is especially painful to the Vice President. First, he has become inured to being hit over the head far more often than being patted on the back, and this new situation requires a bit of adjustment to a man who in way is almost proud to have been so long the chosen whipping boy of the administration, unique in that regard if in no other.

Most visibly to those who have talked to him of late, Agnew does not relish the role of poor old Spiro, of the brand being plucked from the burning.

Second, and of course far more importantly, the whole business of Save-Agnew-At-All-Cost runs head-on into both his sense of propriety and his sense of realism. He recognizes the iron reality that our whole tradition accepts without question that it is the President's right, and custom, to select his running mate upon this purely objective criterion: Will he help me or hurt me?

THE VICE PRESIDENT also knows two other facts of life. One is that should a kind of hot gospel pro-Agnew movement spread widely it could deeply rend the Republican Party and that if the consequence should be Mr. Nixon's defeat few would look beyond a man named Spiro Agnew as the sole villain of the piece. The other is that when you keep saying to any President that he simply "must" select so and so to run with him, that President is very likely to say "the devil I must."

So it is that Spiro Agnew is, to use a favorite administration expression, lowering his profile all over the place—and wishing to heaven that his more frenetic well-

wishers, would go off some where and cool off. That he would not welcome being dumped is, of course, obvious. But that he would break into inconsolable sobs if he were in fact dumped is, in this columnist's considered opinion, most doubtful.

For this is not the usual kind of politician — very far from it. And as odd as this may sound there is no real doubt that given the alternative of a place on the ticket that might actually result in President Nixon's defeat, or could even be so interpreted, and the simple alternative of going home to Maryland, Agnew would choose Maryland every time.

NO MAN, in any event, really wants to be pointed to as a kind of Typhoid Mary, especially in so grand an affair as a presidential contest. But in Spiro Agnew's case this disinclination is but the beginning. He is deeply burned, inside, that when the 1970 senatorial and congressional campaign ended unsatisfactorily from the viewpoint of some in the GOP, it was Agnew upon whom nearly all the dead cats were thrown.

Whatever else may happen, the Vice President distinctly does not want any more dead cats hurled in his vicinity. Thus it is that if he is any way, however subtle, campaigning for re-nomination, he is most surely doing so without recourse to outside lobbying in any form. So it is that, in private as in public, he has only the kindest for words for John Connally, the Democratic Secretary of the Treasury who is the object of an immense build-up by anti-Agnewites (most of them Democrats) as the only proper successor to the Vice Presidential nomination in any just world.

Anybody can enter this guessing game for free; and anybody's guess is as good as that of anybody else. My own is that when it is all over at the San Diego GOP convention next summer the Vice Presidential nominee's initials will be S.A.

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I've read only the lead, which is false. He has two men, both its former chairmen, at the current YAF convention.