

NYTimes AUG 24 1973  
**Nixon Support of Agnew  
Fails to Ease Tensions**

**Associates of the Vice President Think  
The President's Comments Fell Far  
Short of a Pledge of Solidarity**

By CHRISTOPHER LYDON  
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Aug. 23 — President Nixon's affirmation of confidence yesterday in Vice President Agnew has not eased the tension between their two offices.

On further examination today, Mr. Agnew's associates said the President's remarks appeared to fall far short of a pledge of solidarity with the Vice President, still a target of the Federal investigation of political corruption in Maryland.

And Mr. Nixon's senior staff members, with the President in San Clemente, Calif., were carefully declining again today to involve themselves in Mr. Agnew's defense, in much the same way Mr. Nixon refused all comment on what he called the "charges" against the Vice President.

At his news conference yesterday, President Nixon declared that the two top aides he dismissed in the Watergate scandal, John D. Ehrlichman and H. R. Haldeman, "will be exonerated." Yet he omitted any prediction in the Agnew case—a difference that seemed significant to independent observers and to some of Mr. Agnew's friends.

"It doesn't really matter what a man with a 38 per cent credibility rating says about you anyway," said one angry Agnew associate, who feels that Mr. Nixon's jeopardy in the Watergate case is graver than Mr. Agnew's problem in Maryland. "A White House endorsement could be the kiss of death at this point."

Yesterday, Mr. Nixon said of Mr. Agnew:

"My confidence in his integrity has not been shaken, and in fact it has been strengthened by his courageous conduct and his ability even though he's controversial at times, as I am, over the past four and a half years, and so I have confidence in the integrity of the Vice President and particularly in the performance of the duties that he has had as Vice President, and as a candidate for Vice President."

**Joint Effort Barred**

In Washington, Charles Al Wright, the constitutional lawyer who has asserted—in connection with the Watergate investigations—a Presidential immunity from criminal prosecution, confirmed that White House lawyers had rebuffed feelers from Mr. Agnew's lawyers about joint legal efforts.

Mr. Wright, the chief strategist in President Nixon's Watergate defense, commented in a brief telephone interview, that he had not studied, and did not plan to study, the question of whether the Vice President could be indicated or whether,

as Mr. Wright has argued about the President, he would first have to be impeached.

"We're sticking entirely out of that," Mr. Wright said, of the Vice President's legal situation. But he clearly regarded the positions of the Government's two top executive officers as separable. Neither the framers of the Constitution nor the courts, he said, offer any detailed guidance on Vice-Presidential impeachment; at least by contrast, he feels, the legal doctrine on Presidential im-

peachment is extensive and clear.

"We don't know whether the positions are related or not," he said.

Mr. Wright's lack of interest in Mr. Agnew's predicament was only one more illustration of the growing distance between the White House and Mr. Agnew's second-floor suite in the Executive Office Building next door.

**A Powerless Office**

Relations between Presidents and their Vice Presidents have often been tense and unhappy; many of Mr. Agnew's predecessors have felt unused or ill-used in their constitutionally powerless office. President Nixon's friends say that Mr. Agnew has been better treated than Vice President Nixon was treated by President Eisenhower, Vice President Johnson was treated by President Kennedy, or Vice President Humphrey by President Johnson.

Yet tensions between Mr. Agnew and Mr. Nixon have clearly mounted since the nouncement early this month that the Vice President is under criminal investigation—to the point of open slights by the White House staff and scathing off-the-record acrimony among M. Agnew's loyal followers.

Gerald Warren, the chief White House spokesman recently, had hesitated at first to convey any Presidential support for Mr. Agnew. Subsequently, at a news conference that President Nixon reportedly tried to prevent, Mr. Agnew declared that he would "stand on his own feet." A senior White House advisor commented immediately, "Well, if he thinks he has to stand on his own two feet, we'll just let him."

**Advice From Laird**

Representative John B. Anderson of Illinois, chairman of the House Republican Conference, disclosed last week that Melvin R. Laird, who is Mr. Ehrlichman's successor on the White House staff, had called him "in a private capacity" as soon as the Agnew investigation was confirmed, to discourage any public rallying to the Vice President's defense.

Accordingly, President Nixon's support of Mr. Agnew yesterday was being scornfully rejected by Mr. Agnew's friends today—as too little, too late.

"My feeling is they want him indicted," said one Agnew adviser, exaggerating for effect but quite serious in his anger at White House staff members. "Then they want him impeached because you can only have one impeachment proceeding in the House of Representatives at a time—and any other candidates for impeachment would have to wait in line."

At the same time, Agnew associates have professed little sympathy for President Nixon's recent difficulties—even though Mr. Agnew has repeatedly declared his support of Mr. Nixon in the Watergate crisis.

Victory Gold, for example, Mr. Agnew's former press secretary, made no secret of his amusement at an embarrassing incident Monday in New Orleans when President Nixon, in sudden anger, grabbed his press secretary, Ronald L. Ziegler by

the shoulders and shoved him into a cluster of newsmen following the President.

"If I were Ron Ziegler," Mr. Gold said today, "I'd call a press conference and announce his resignation. He ought to say: 'Richard Nixon's not going to have me to shove around anymore'—a parody of Mr. Nixon's outburst at reporters, after his defeat in the California Governor's race in 1962, that 'You won't have Nixon to kick around any more.'"