

Agnew Is Unhappy With World Book



Jack Anderson

FORMER VICE PRESIDENT Spiro Agnew is trying to rewrite the history of his downfall.

He has fired off a bristling protest to World Book Encyclopedia over its account of his forced resignation. The respected encyclopedia factually reported in its 1974 yearbook that Agnew resigned the vice presidency last October after having pleaded "no contest" to a charge of income tax evasion.

"In return for Agnew's resignation and no-contest plea to the tax-evasion charge," reported World Book, "the government agreed not to prosecute him for alleged acts of extortion and bribery . . .

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IN a 40-page exposition of evidence, the government alleged that shortly after his election as executive of Baltimore county in 1962, Agnew began and directed a complex scheme to extort thousands of dollars from consulting engineers in Maryland. In return, he allegedly granted them profitable government contracts.

"Allegedly, Agnew continued to operate the kickback scheme from 1962 through his two years as Governor of Maryland and during his first four years as Vice President."

The encyclopedia stressed that Agnew "denied that he was guilty. He said that

accepting 'contributions' while Governor of Maryland was 'part of a long-established pattern' of political fund-raising in the state."

This history of Agnew's fall from power, although quite accurate, displeased the former vice president. Angrily, he sent back his copy of the yearbook and demanded in an accompanying letter that the Agnew name be removed from the firm's mailing list.

World Book officials refused to show us the Agnew letter, claiming it would be a "breach of confidence." Sources who have seen it, however, told us Agnew claimed the yearbook article was a distortion of the truth.

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HE COMPLAINED that he had been persecuted, that he had been found guilty of nothing. The entire case against him, he charged, was built upon the testimony of tainted men. The encyclopedia's account, added Agnew, reflected a leftist bias. It was a trait he found all too common in the nation's news media, he protested.

World Book's summary of the Agnew affair went to press before Maryland judges ruled that he should be disbarred.

FOOTNOTE: The former Vice President, who was traveling in Iran, couldn't be reached for comment.