

Agnew Rumor May Have Been a Trick

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 10—White House officials are now saying privately that speculation about Vice President Agnew's being dumped from the Republican ticket in 1972 was deliberately planted to help elect Representative George Bush of Texas to the Senate.

But the prevailing view is that it may have done Mr. Bush more harm than good. And the official credited by fellow White House aides with having conceived the move denies that he had anything to do with it.

Speculation that Mr. Bush would be President Nixon's running mate in 1972 if he captured the Senate seat came to the surface a week before the election in a Washington Post column written by David S. Broder. He attributed it to "men intimately involved in White House political operations."

Since Mr. Bush's defeat by his Democratic rival, Lloyd M. Bentsen Jr., Presidential aides have been explaining the rumor by saying that it was a ploy to convince Texans that the Republican candidate had a brilliant future if only he won on Nov. 3.

By these accounts, the speculation was started by Robert H. Finch, counselor to the President and an official known to have disagreed with Mr. Agnew on policies in the past.

Mr. Finch denied today that he had started the speculation.

"I read it in the paper," he said. "I know how sensitive the President is" about such speculation, Mr. Finch added, "because I was with him when he was being 'pushed off the ticket'" during President Eisenhower's first term.

Furthermore, some White House officials say that the speculation may have harmed Mr. Bush's candidacy. They feel that ardent conservatives in west Texas and the Panhandle who admire the Vice President may have resented the implied criticism of his performance and might have taken it out on Mr. Bush.

Mr. Bush may yet be rewarded by the President, along with several other Republicans who gave up secure political jobs at Mr. Nixon's bidding to run unsuccessfully for the Senate.

As the Nixon Administration nears its second anniversary, there is an air of impending change in the Cabinet. Walter J. Hickel, Secretary of the Interior; Clifford M. Mardin, Secretary of Agriculture, and George Romney, Secretary of Hous-

ing and Urban Development, are regarded in post-election analysis as men whose replacement would not be a surprise here.

Two others who could depart before long are David M. Kennedy, Secretary of the Treasury, and Maurice H. Stans, Secretary of Commerce.

There is considerable trepidation, as Mr. Nixon gears up for his campaign in 1972, about filling up the Cabinet with people whose election efforts failed. Here is a scorecard on top-level changes said to be under consideration:

¶Mr. Bush, a Houston oilman with a background in economics, is being mentioned as a potential successor to Mr. Romney, Mr. Kennedy or Dr. Thomas O. Paine, who retired as administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

¶John C. Danforth, the Attorney General of Missouri who nearly upset Stuart M. Symington, Democratic Senator, is regarded as a dark-horse candidate for Mr. Hickel's job.

The Republican National Chairman, Representative Rogers C. B. Morton of Maryland, also has his eye on Interior. If he gets that appointment, Mr. Finch is a strong possibility to assume direction of the party.

Mr. Nixon is reportedly preparing to replace Stanley R. Resor, Secretary of the Army, with Representative William C. Cramer, who lost the Florida Senate race.

Nebraska's Governor, Norbert T. Tiemann, is among possibilities as a new Secretary of Agriculture after failing to win re-election.

The White House also wants to reward three Representatives who stumbled on the way to the Senate—Clark MacGregor of Minnesota, Thomas Kleppe of North Dakota and Laurence J. Burton of Utah.

One way to recognize the efforts of Republicans who fought the good fight but failed to appoint those who are lawyers to the Federal judiciary. A judgeship in Maryland has already been promised to C. Stanley Blair, former administrative aide to the Vice President, who ran for Governor.

The Administration has been saving judicial appointments and now has seven vacancies on the Appellate bench and 43 in District Courts in 21 states.

¶If Attorney General John N. Mitchell resigns—despite

a Justice Department denial that he will do so—to prepare to manage Mr. Nixon's next Presidential race, his successor will likely be chosen from within the Administration.

Richard G. Kleindienst, the Deputy Attorney General, would like the job, but one source says that the man on the inside track is John D. Ehrlichman, the President's domestic affairs adviser.

Other forthcoming shifts may see Donald M. Rumsfeld, director of the Office of Economic Opportunity, replacing Daniel Patrick Moynihan as a counselor to the President. According to persistent reports at O.E.O., the agency will be taken over by John D. Twiname, deputy administrator of the Social and Rehabilitation Service at the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

Harry S. Flemming, special assistant to the President who has been in command of personnel recruiting, is expected to leave the White House in February, to resume active direction of his three weekly newspapers in northern Virginia.