

Growing GOP Belief Agnew

By Walter R. Mears

WASHINGTON — (AP) — Vice President Agnew, who considered it disastrous when an American table tennis team went to China, may not have a place on the 1972 ticket of a President who is going there himself.

Republican sources report a growing feeling in GOP congressional circles that Agnew will not be Nixon's choice as a running mate next year.

One GOP senator said that feeling existed even before Nixon's announcement that he will visit China revived

memories of past Agnew dissent against administration overtures to Peking.

Agnew was in Kinshasa, Congo, when Nixon made his dramatic announcement Thursday night. The first comment from the vice president was no comment.

Yesterday, in Madrid, he expanded on that a bit:

"I am not free to comment on anything concerning President Nixon's announcement regarding mainland China."

He also declined to say if he knew in advance about presidential adviser Henry

Kissinger's mission to Peking to set up the Nixon visit.

A Republican source in Washington expressed surprise that Agnew would not comment, saying the White House had urged GOP members of Congress to issue statements on the Nixon decision.

Agnew Opposed

Agnew has been on a world tour, and there was no indication as to whether he had been briefed in advance on Nixon's plan to go to China.

His misgivings about U.S. policy toward China became known when he talked, off

the record, with a small group of reporters and then with Republican governors at a conference in Williamsburg, Va., April 19.

Agnew is known to have raised questions in the National Security Council early this year about the effect of U.S. overtures to Peking on American ties with the Nationalist government on Formosa.

His statements there were described as a reminder of U.S. commitments to the Nationalists.

At the time of the Wil-

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Williamsburg meetings, one source said Agnew seemed to be implying that there should not be a thaw in U.S. relations with Peking.

He also is known to have expressed misgivings at that time about the pace of U.S. efforts to improve relations with the mainland government.

Agnew was specifically critical then of the Chinese tour of the American table tennis team and at the way it was reported, calling it a propaganda victory for Peking and a disaster for the United States.

The White House later quoted Agnew as saying he supported conciliatory Nixon moves toward China, but a distinction clearly remained between supporting a policy and agreeing with it.

Nixon Goal

The issue looms the more important because Nixon has repeatedly told congressional leaders in private meetings that the improvement of U.S. relations with China is one of his great foreign policy goals.

Early in his Presidency, long before the gradual process of easing trade and

travel restrictions had begun, he said so to Senate Democratic leader Mike Mansfield over breakfast at the White House.

When Congress convened Jan. 20, Mansfield and Senate Republican leader Hugh Scott telephoned Nixon to ask his desires in the new session.

"My desire is to visit mainland China," Scott said Nixon replied.

Trouble Due

Nixon's decision to go there spells certain trouble with the more conservative wing of his own Republican

Party, where dissent was quick in coming.

Agnew's political muscle has developed with that branch of the GOP, but one GOP senator questioned whether Agnew, in view of his past position on the pace of U.S. moves involving China, could now serve as a credible emissary to conservatives dismayed at the Nixon trip.

Another senator said Nixon "regards Agnew as expendable. He just has to decide whether dropping Agnew would do him more harm or good."