

## A Frustrating Vice Presidency

# Agnew's Task Uncertain

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Washington Post Service

### Washington

Spiro Agnew declared firmly yesterday that he is still the president's man but said he often has been frustrated by the vice presidency and is uncertain of his role in the second Nixon administration.

"Quite candidly, the president hasn't defined my role yet," Agnew said. "I don't know exactly what I'll be doing and it's up to the president to define it."

In a wide-ranging interview the vice president also speculated that the Watergate bugging case "could be harmful" to him if he becomes a presidential candidate despite his own lack of personal involvement.

Agnew said that the issue would be a liability for Republican candidates in 1974 and 1976 if the political espionage questions are not "quickly resolved in the public mind" by the present legal proceedings.

### NOT

Agnew also reaffirmed his belief that Mr. Nixon was not personally involved in the Watergate case, and he criticized the Senate select committee headed by Senator Sam Ervin (Dem-N.C.) for proceeding with hearings before the grand jury "has completed the indictment process."

Two themes dominated the vice president's responses to a variety of questions — his personal loyalty to the president whether he's "riding high or under attack" and his uncertainty about what his role would be during the remainder of Mr. Nixon's term.

On May 2, two days after the president's dismissal of his top aides because of the widening Watergate scandal, the White House announced that Agnew would be given new duties, including vice chairmanship of the Domestic Council.

### NEW

But the president has never spelled out what the new duties will entail, and Agnew last week passed up an invitation to address the Republican governors meeting in New York.

Agnew said he did so because he didn't want to appear to be undercutting Kenneth R. Cole Jr., the executive director of the Domestic Council. Agnew said that his appearance at the meeting might have made it appear that he was "assuming his old role" of administration spokesman to the governors.

### FIRST

Apart from his specific lack of knowledge about what his new assignments might be, Agnew conceded that he on many occasions has felt frustrated in the vice presidency because of the relative powerlessness of the office.



SPIRO AGNEW  
'Up to the president'

The vice president recalled that he had previously served in government positions with executive authority, first as executive for Baltimore county and then as governor of Maryland.

"It's an intellectual frustration for a man who's spent his time in executive government making decisions to suddenly find that he cannot make decisions anymore, that he can only

recommend that they be made," Agnew said.

Agnew said he has reached no decision about his candidacy but would not run for president unless it appeared he could win.

### GO

"I can assure you of this that if I go after the nomination it will be because I think I can get it and once having achieved it that I think I can be elected," the vice president said.

Agnew proclaimed repeatedly during the interview that he was the "president's man," the phrase he used to describe himself in his acceptance speech at the 1972 Republican convention.

He said he could not conceive of any circumstances that would cause President Nixon to step down because of the Watergate case.