

'Get It Over With'

Agnew And Watergate

By James M. Naughton
N.Y. Times Service

Washington

Vice President Spiro Agnew said yesterday that the facts in the Watergate conspiracy case should be "dredged" into the open quickly so that the nation, and the Republican party, could "get it over with."

He expressed renewed faith that the outcome would demonstrate that President Nixon "is untouched by these matters as far as any direct involvement is concerned."

But he stipulated, in an hour-long conversation in his office at the White House complex, that he had no more knowledge of the truth of the Watergate affair than the average reader of newspaper accounts or viewer of the Senate's televised investigative hearings.

RESPONSIBILITY

Agnew said that he had made no effort to "beyond what the general public knows" about the Watergate case because the investigators had enough to do without briefing him on it, and he had "no direct responsibility to act on any of these matters" under investigation.

"It would be a mere point of satisfying my own curiosity," he said, "and that can wait just as everyone else's can."

Mail Probe Asked-- 'Tampering'

Washington

Representative Charles H. Wilson (Dem-Calif.), chairman of a House Post Office committee, asked for an investigation yesterday into reports that mail of two Democratic presidential candidates was illegally opened.

Wilson, in a letter to Postmaster General E.T. Klussen, said he is trying to confirm that the federal Watergate grand jury in probing the matter.

George Gould, a Wilson aide, said some mail of Senator Edmund Muskie was copied and put back in the original envelopes at the Washington post office in February, 1972. The mail of Senator George McGovern

The vice president appeared to tread gently along a narrow line separating loyalty to President Nixon and consideration of his and his party's political futures.

"There's no matter of more important sensitivity than Watergate, regardless of what the Gallup Poll



AP Wirephoto

CHARLES WILSON
2 Democratic candidates

was also apparently tampered with during the Florida primary campaign, Gould said, citing his own sources.

Associated Press

says," Agnew said, disputing the poll's finding earlier this month that inflation and crime ranked ahead of the Watergate case as a matter of concern among voters.

HEARINGS

He renewed his opposition to the televised Senate hearings into the Watergate con-

spiracy, saying that they should be put off until after federal grand juries and the courts explored the possibility of criminal charges.

But Agnew said that he agreed with Senator Herman E. Talmadge of Georgia, one of the Democrats on the Senate investigating committee, that if the hearings continue, they should focus immediately on the highest level of culpability in the White House.

"I feel like Senator Talmadge does," said the vice president. "I'd like to see it all get dredged and get it over with."

WIRETAPS

Agnew voiced approval of domestic wiretapping for national security purposes so long as the President determines that it involves "matters vital to the protection of our country." But he asserted, that "one of the things I would never do is tap another person's conversation, regardless of how advantageous it might be to me individually."

He endorsed the 4000-word statement issued last week by the President — "his definitive statement," Agnew called it — to say that the White House had undertaken a series of domestic surveillance activities to safeguard government secrets. But the vice president declined to state — "until all the facts are developed" — whether he was personally comfortable with the suggestion, implicit in Mr. Nixon's statement, that White House subordinates have gone overboard in their zeal to plug leaks of information about sensitive diplomatic initiatives.

Reports circulated here last month that Agnew was being urged by his political advisers to make a public statement dissociating himself from the Watergate case as a means of heading off any harmful impact to his prospects as a presidential contender in 1976.