

Judges Want an Outsider To Handle Agnew Inquiry

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BALTIMORE, Aug. 15 — The chief judge of the United States District Court here, Edward S. Northrop, asked today that a judge from outside the district encompassing Maryland be appointed to handle all matters that involve the investigation of Vice President Agnew so that "nobody can say there's been any cover-up, or something personal one way or another."

Judge Northrop, who said he himself was a close friend of the Vice President, said in a statement that "because of the unique position of the Vice President and his relationship to the state of Maryland, the members of his court feel that the best interests of all concerned would be served" if Clement F. Haynsworth Jr., chief judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, would pick a judge from outside Maryland.

Sitting in his chambers and puffing on his pipe, Judge Northrop said also that Judge C. Stanley Blair of the court had asked that he be relieved of handling any matters in connection with the grand jury that is hearing testimony on allegations of extortion, bribery, tax fraud and conspiracy while Mr. Agnew was Governor of Maryland.

Procedure Rescinded

Judge Blair, appointed by President Nixon in 1971, was a long-time supporter of Mr. Agnew, a Maryland secretary of state while Mr. Agnew was governor and the Vice President's chief of staff in the first two years of the Nixon Administration.

Judge Northrop, said that Judge Blair had asked to be taken off the assignment of supervising the grand jury, which was sworn in Dec. 4, because he was concerned that his former close connection with the Vice President might create the impression that the grand jury

was being influenced in some way.

Judge Northrop said that at least three other judges had handled matters concerning the grand jury when Judge Blair was not available because of trial commitments.

He said that the grand jury from now on would be handled by any judge, except Judge Blair, who is free at the time.

He also said that because of the Vice President's offer to answer questions personally and open his records to the United States Attorney, the grand jury so far had not been restrained in any way in its investigation by the doctrine of separation of powers, which was recently invoked by President Nixon in his refusal to turn over tape recordings in the Watergate investigation.

Judge Northrop said that it was up to the Vice President to raise that issue and that if he did, it would be dealt with by the new judge.

'Fireman Waiting for a Ball'

The judge, who once helped a key aide for the Vice President, said that the grand jury had not come upon "any sensitive matters pertaining to the Vice President so far. I hope the hell there aren't any."

He also described the new judge's role as being one of "a fireman waiting for a ball," since he will have no other duties in the court except to wait for a matter to come up that would involve the Vice President.

Judge Haynsworth, who was rejected for a position on the Supreme Court by the Senate in 1969, will be able to pick a new judge from districts encompassing a wide area. They include parts of North Carolina and Virginia.

Asked to elaborate on why the judges in the district of Maryland had decided to ask for an outside judge, Judge Northrop said that six of the nine judges were Republicans

appointed by Presidents Nixon or Eisenhower, and that of the remaining three judges, who are Democrats, two had some association with Mr. Agnew when he was active in Maryland politics. The third judge decided to join the others in seeking an outside judge.