

White House Is Reported Seeking Silence on Agnew

WASHINGTON, Aug. 20 (AP)—The Nixon Administration cautioned some key Republican members of Congress today against making hasty public statements about the possibility that criminal charges would be filed against Vice President Agnew, Government sources said today.

It was understandable that such requests would be made, one Government official said, "because some Congressmen sometimes have a tendency to jump the gun."

Melvin R. Laird, President Nixon's domestic adviser, called Representative John B. Anderson, Illinois Republican who is chairman of the House Republican Conference, with an admonition to avoid public comment on the matter, according to Mr. Anderson.

Inquiry on Kickbacks

Senator Robert P. Griffin, Michigan Republican who is the assistant G.O.P. leader, also received a call but it could not be learned whether it had come from Mr. Laird or some other individual.

Mr. Griffin, like many other members of the Senate and House, was on vacation and not immediately available for comment.

Mr. Agnew revealed Aug. 6 that he had been informed that he was under investigation for

possible conspiracy, bribery, extortion and tax fraud in connection with alleged kickbacks by construction and engineering concerns in Maryland. The Vice President, who previously served as Baltimore County's chief executive and later as Governor, has denied any wrongdoing.

Mr. Laird's call to Mr. Anderson was first reported by Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, the news columnists, who said that Mr. Laird had warned Mr. Anderson "not to go all-out in defense" of Mr. Agnew. The columnists added that the White House move had in-

furiated the Vice President's aides.

Mr. Anderson confirmed the call from Mr. Laird but disputed the columnist's interpretation as "not an accurate reference to Laird's motivation."

"I felt it was out of a desire to keep members of the Republican party from making premature comments pending further investigation," Mr. Anderson said. "It was not out of a cabal against Agnew."

He said he believed Mr. Laird wanted Republicans to exercise caution "and not go off a deep end one way or another — not get out front

on a matter that is still in a very tenuous state."

The fact that Mr. Nixon himself has made no public defense of Mr. Agnew has fed speculation that the White House hopes the Vice President's problems might divert attention from Watergate.

Mr. Anderson said that Mr. Laird had told him he had no information beyond that which already had come out — that a Federal inquiry was in progress. The Congressman said he did not pass Mr. Laird's warning on to anyone else and did not know if Mr. Laird had spoken with any others.