

If Agnew Goes: Nixon Might Pick a Democrat

To the Editor:

The criminal allegations against Vice President Agnew, if substantiated, are likely to force Mr. Agnew's resignation or removal from office. The position of Vice President would then be filled in accordance with the requirements of the six-year-old 25th Amendment, which states that "whenever there is a vacancy in the office of the Vice President, the President shall nominate a Vice President who shall take office upon confirmation by a majority vote of both houses of Congress." This would provide Mr. Nixon with an excellent opportunity to move toward reconciliation with Congress. He could appoint a Democrat. Although the idea of the Nixon Administration becoming bipartisan may seem amazing, it is not far-fetched.

First, President Nixon has twice considered Democrats for high posts. Before entering the White House he offered the post of Defense Secretary to Senator Jackson, who might well be eligible for the Vice-Presidential slot. Later he appointed Governor Connally Secretary of Treasury.

Second, Mr. Nixon's choice of Spiro Agnew as his running mate indicates that he does not give great consideration to the fact that the Vice President may suddenly be required to assume the Presidency. Since he did not deem the fact that Mr. Agnew's total experience in a position of significant responsibility consisted of two years as Governor of Maryland grounds for disqualification, he might not consider the fact that a Democrat would have different views on some major national issues if elevated to the Presidency a disqualifying factor.

Third, the President has in the past been willing to sacrifice the G.O.P. for his own personal political gain. In the 1972 election while leading 2 to 1 in the polls he refused to stump for Republican office-seekers. He could again refuse to heed G.O.P. objections to his nomination of a Democratic Vice President.

Fourth, and most important, the choice of a Democrat would provide twofold benefits in Congress. It would avoid a messy and possibly unsuccessful confirmation fight while Mr. Nixon is at his weakest point ever. And it would, moreover, give the President greater leverage in Congress, which would improve his chances of enacting his legislation and slightly diminish his chances of being impeached.

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