

## Agnew

## Status

## Clouded

Resignation  
Talk Draws  
'No Comments'

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The White House yesterday refused to comment on reports that Vice President Spiro T. Agnew would resign, and declined to respond to questions about whether President Nixon still supports him.

Agnew, although cheered by telephone calls and telegrams which urged him not to resign, also declined to comment on reports that he would step down. A spokesman for the Vice President said that Agnew may have discussed the possibility of resigning and that his "dark mood" may have been "misinterpreted" by some people.

"It's possible that anyone who has been through what the Vice President has been through may have reflected his condition in somber terms and given someone the impression that his mood was more forlorn than it appeared to be," said J. Marsh Thomson, the Vice President's press secretary.

"It's entirely understandable that an individual who is not able to see the whole screen of the Vice President's attitude would get an exaggerated opinion of the weight he is giving to the option of resigning," Thomson said.

Agnew was confronted by newsmen as he was leaving a luncheon he gave for visiting Pakistani Prime Minister Ali Bhutto, and asked to comment on a story in The Washington Post, which quoted a senior Republican figure as saying that he was "99½ per cent certain" that Agnew would resign "and probably this week."

"Gentlemen, as you know, it is my practice not to comment on stories from undisclosed sources," Agnew said. Then he got into his waiting limousine and left.

The White House declined to comment in any way on the report that the Vice President has considered resigning, adding to speculation that relations between the President and Agnew are strained.

Spokesman Gerald L. Warren faced a barrage of questions, and replied to all that

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he would not comment on the Agnew matter in any way.

Warren said he had discussed the matter with the President and that the President was aware of The Washington Post report about the vice President.

However, no one at the White House would say even privately that the story about Agnew's impending resignation was untrue. Some Republicans close to Agnew, speaking on a not-for-attribution basis, said that they feared that the White House was responsible for stories that the Vice President would quit.

One congressman who has been a strong supporter said he was suspicious that Agnew was being "sandbagged" by some persons at the White House.

"Let me tell you something," said Rep. William J. Scherle (R-Iowa). "As far as I'm concerned, the White House is not cleaned out. Haldeman and Ehrlichman are gone—and they were no friends of the Vice President—but their ghosts still haunt the place."

Agnew's former press secretary, Vic Gold, described the story as "an absurdity."

In an interview with United Press International, Gold attributed the story to "half a dozen people working for the White House," and added:

"It is the White House in my opinion that is out to serve the Vice President up like John the Baptist, except the Vice President is not going to be served."

The President and Vice President conferred at length at the White House on Sept. 1, and that is the last time they have met privately, Warren said. Agnew attended a Cabinet meeting Sept. 7 and stood in a reception line with the President Sept. 10 at a reception for members of the Republican National Committee. He and Mrs. Agnew were also on the guest list for last night's state dinner for Pakistan Prime Minister and Mrs. Bhutto.

When a reporter asked if the Vice President is going to resign, Warren replied: "I have no comment on the story that prompts your question. I just have no comment whatsoever."

When another reporter asked if he would not deny the story, Warren again said he would have no comment regardless of how the questions were asked.

Asked to comment on that part of the story reporting a lack of presidential confidence in Agnew, Warren replied:

"I have seen and heard a lot of reports. You can put questions such as that to me in any way you want to. 'Can you deny? Will you deny? You are leaving open. Will you not confirm?' I am just in a position where I will 'no comment' questions of that sort."

Another reporter asked if Agnew still enjoyed the President's full faith and confidence, and again Warren said, "You can come at me any way you want to . . . I am in a position where I am 'no comment' the entire story."

When a reporter noted that "some friends of the Vice

President are suggesting that your 'no commenting' is the same as a kiss of death," Warren refused to change his stance.

"Do you intend to leave us with the impression that the President has not inquired as to whether the Vice President is going to resign or not?" a reporter asked.

Thomson, the Vice President's press secretary, said that initial reaction to the story was favorable to Agnew. Twenty telephone calls and 32 of the first 35 telegrams urged Agnew not to resign, Thomson said.

Agnew was deluged with favorable letters, telegrams and calls after an Aug. 8 news conference in which he acknowledged he was under investigation for possible violation of bribery, tax fraud, extortion and conspiracy laws while an office-holder in Maryland. He was asked at the news conference, "If the investigations should progress and get more serious, even though you consider yourself innocent, might you consider stepping down to protect public confidence?"

"Let me say right now that I have no expectation of being indicted," Agnew replied. "And I'm not going to face any contingent thinking in that respects at this time."

However, Agnew discussed the possibility of resignation only eight days later when he met privately with Republican leaders in Colorado while on a speaking trip. The day after Mr. Nixon's Watergate speech Agnew met in a session with GOP leaders, who agreed not to discuss the issue with the press.

But it was learned yesterday that Agnew at this meeting had asked whether he should resign. Most of the Republicans present said he should stay on the job and fight the charges.

"I formed the opinion that Agnew was determined not to resign," said Colorado GOP State Chairman Steve Hamilton.

Hamilton added that any resignation by Agnew would have only a "short-term effect" on the Republican Party. If such a resignation occurred, said Hamilton, he believed that Agnew would be replaced by John Connally, whom he described as "effective and articulate."

One official said he believed that the speculation about Agnew's resignation was similar to that raised when Julie Nixon Eisenhower reported that her father, the President, had discussed resigning as a result of the Watergate scandal.

High government officials in general seemed to be uninformed about the true nature of the Vice President's thinking. There was acknowledgement in some quarters that relations between the President and Vice President were strained. But no one would concede that Mr. Nixon may have brought pressure on his Vice President to resign.

In New York, Sen. Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.) denied that he was the source of The Washington Post's Agnew story.

"I don't think he's going to quit," Goldwater said. "My hunch is he's going to stay."

The Vice President is a good political and social friend of mine. I have seen him often recently and this subject has never come up. If it did, I would advise him to fight it out."

California Gov. Ronald Reagan, asked about the story at his weekly news conference, said he would be "very surprised if that rumor were true." Regan said he also doubted whether the White House had prepared a contingency list of possible vice presidential candidates if Agnew resigns.

Asked what he would say if he were asked to serve as Vice President, Reagan replied: "Before or after I fainted?"

Reports that a contingency list does exist—and that it is headed by Connally—have persistently been denied by the White House.

The 25th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution provides that the President shall name a successor if the vice presidency becomes vacant.

The appointment is subject to the confirmation of a majority of both houses of Congress.