

Strauss Cautions Nixon on Agnew Successor

By Lou Cannon

Washington Post Staff Writer

Democratic National Chairman Robert S. Strauss said yesterday that he hopes President Nixon won't choose a prospective 1976 presidential candidate to succeed Spiro Agnew if the Vice President resigns.

Strauss told a breakfast meeting of reporters that the President should make "a non-presidential type of appointment" if Agnew quits.

The Vice President, who has said in the past that he has no intention of resigning, has this week declined to comment on two separate reports by Republican figures that he will step down. One senior Republican figure said Monday that he was "99½ per cent cer-

tain" that Agnew would quit—"and probably this week." On Wednesday, an Eastern Republican said that a principal White House figure had forecast Agnew's resignation in the "next few weeks."

Yesterday, White House spokesman Gerald L. Warren repeated his denial of the day before that anyone in the White House is pressuring the Vice President to resign. Similar denials have come from Alexander M. Haig Jr., the White House chief of staff, and from Melvin R. Laird, the President's domestic counselor.

However, one White House aide—while continuing to insist that no attempt was being

made to get Agnew to quit—predicted that Congress would approve anyone selected by Mr. Nixon if a vice presidential vacancy actually occurs.

This aide said that Democrats in Congress would be in no position to "play politics" with a vice presidential nomination.

A similar view, and one that partially contradicted the Strauss statement, was made by Kentucky Gov. Wendell Ford, chairman of the Democratic Governors Caucus.

Ford said it would be "bad politics generally" for a Democratic controlled Congress to block a vice presidential appointment.

"The President should be

able to select that individual," Ford said. "We should not block that."

The report on Wednesday in The Washington Post about Agnew's purported resignation within the next few weeks quoted a White House official as saying that it would give the President "an opportunity to set a whole new tone for the administration."

Warren said yesterday that this statement "absolutely does not reflect the White House attitude."

He said that "no one in the position to know the President's attitude" would make such a comment.

In Atlanta, United Press In-

ternational quoted Georgia Gov. Jimmy Carter as saying that Agnew sounded pessimistic Wednesday night when Carter called him to cheer him up.

Carter said that Agnew told him he felt like he was "fighting a division with a platoon" in his battle to clear himself of political kickback charges.

Meanwhile, vice presidential press secretary J. Marsh Thomson said he knew of no plans for Agnew to issue any further statement on the resignation reports. Agnew was adhering to his policy of declining to comment on "source" stories, Thomson said.

A "source" story is one in which the person providing the information is not named.

Agnew spent the morning and early afternoon at his office in the Executive Office Building and then left to play tennis.

Next week he is scheduled to fly to California for four days. Definitely scheduled is a closed-door speech on Sept. 26 before insurance executives in Pebble Beach and a public speech before the California Federation of Republican Women on Sept. 29.

It is likely that the Vice President will stop over while in California for a two-day visit at the home of entertainer Frank Sinatra. However, this stopover has not been definitely scheduled, Thomson said.

In his meeting yesterday morning with reporters Strauss said that the naming of a successor if Agnew does step down would create "a very tricky political situation" for both parties.

"If he makes the appointment of a man who is potential candidate for the nomina-

tion, it creates not only political problems for the Democrats but, in my judgment, creates even more intense problems for the President and the Republican Party," Strauss said.

While Strauss was discussing the possibility of a vice presidential replacement, Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.) was declaring that Agnew should not be presumed guilty because he is under investigation for allegedly accepting kickbacks from Maryland contractors.

"The guy is innocent until proven guilty," Mansfield said.

Sen. James L. Buckley (Cons.-R.-N.Y.) said he hoped that reports that the White House had circulated rumors about Agnew's resignation were untrue.

"... If they have basis in fact, those responsible should be put on notice that Republicans and Americans in general will not take kindly to such shabby, cowardly treatment of the Vice President of the United States."