

A Round of Applause for Agnew

By Dorothy McCardle
and Jeannette Smyth

A relaxed, smiling Spiro T. Agnew returned to the White House last night, this time to a round of applause from 110 dinner guests waiting in the East Room.

The Vice President, whose case involving charges of kickbacks went before a special federal grand jury in Baltimore yesterday, was the administration's ranking guest at a dinner given by President Nixon for New Zealand Prime Minister Norman E. Kirk.

Unlike a week ago at a dinner Mr. Nixon gave for Pakistan's Prime Minister Zulfikar Bhutto when some thought the White House snubbed Agnew, the Vice President last night was introduced with fanfare.

"Ladies and gentlemen," began the White House aide over the public address system, "the Vice President of the United States and Mrs. Agnew and the honorable Secretary of State . . ."

Applause for Agnew erupted at that point, drowning out Henry Kissinger's name.

Agnew initially declined the dinner invitation because of a speaking engagement in California. He subsequently accepted the invitation after delaying his speechmaking trip until this weekend.

After dinner, described by the White House as a "working" dinner, there was no entertainment except music to dance by.

For the first time in public since daughter Tricia's wedding in June, 1971, the President took Mrs. Nixon in his arms and danced a slow foxtrot to the tune of "Sound of Music," played by Howard Devron and his band.

The Nixons had been on their way to the White House usher's office, after

seeing Kirk out of the front door, when Mrs. Nixon said something to the President. They changed direction, walking over to Devron to shake his hand and thank members of his orchestra.

As they head toward the usher's office, Mr. Nixon took Mrs. Nixon in his arms to foxtrot across the lobby and disappear through the office door.

Earlier, as Agnew stood in
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the Blue Room following dinner, he talked affably about his present and future plans.

"The Democrats gave me a very nice reception," he said. "I don't regard Speaker (Calr) Albert's decision (not to hear the Agnew case) as being permanent."

He declined to seriously discuss his lawyers' strategy in defending him against charges brought before the Baltimore grand jury yesterday.

"I never ask my lawyers what they are going to do," he joked. "Anybody who tries to get anything out of his lawyers has a lawyer for a fool, or maybe it's the other way around—has a fool for a lawyer."

Agnew said he leaves this morning for California

where he will "of course," as he put it, stay with his friend Frank Sinatra and play some golf.

He appeared to be enjoying himself so much that the red carpet at the front door was kept down longer than usual. When one guest asked a White House guard why the carpet had not been removed after Kirk had left, the guard replied that the carpet was "waiting for the Vice President."

Henry Kissinger, also in a joking mood, said that his official hostess for State Department entertaining will be selected by computer and will be rotated.

Asked when he first felt that he had actually become Secretary of State (he was confirmed a week ago), Kissinger quipped, evoking a roar of laughter from those listening in, "Four years ago."

From same column, WXP 29 Sep 73, filed Nixon:

The President's brother, F. Donald Nixon, was on the guest list but did not attend because he was undergoing physical tests, according to his wife.

Saying that she had no comment on reports that the Secret Service had tapped her husband's telephone, she added that both she and her husband think the President "is the most fantastic and the greatest leader that this country has ever had. We love him dearly."

When one reporter persisted, "You didn't mind having your phones tapped?"

"Not at all," she said.