

G.O.P. Women, With a Hint of Forlornness, Warmly Support Agnew

By STEVEN V. ROBERTS

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LOS ANGELES, Sept. 30— Vice President Agnew had left the hall and returned to the Palm Springs estate of his friend, Frank Sinatra. Members of the National Federation of Republican Women were having cocktails and talking about the speech he had just given—an impassioned denunciation of the Justice Department and a stern refusal to resign, even if indicted.

"I was elated, he was fantastic," said Sara Prevedello of Santa Barbara, Calif. "I like the idea that he came off so honestly. He gives you the feeling that he's somebody to listen to."

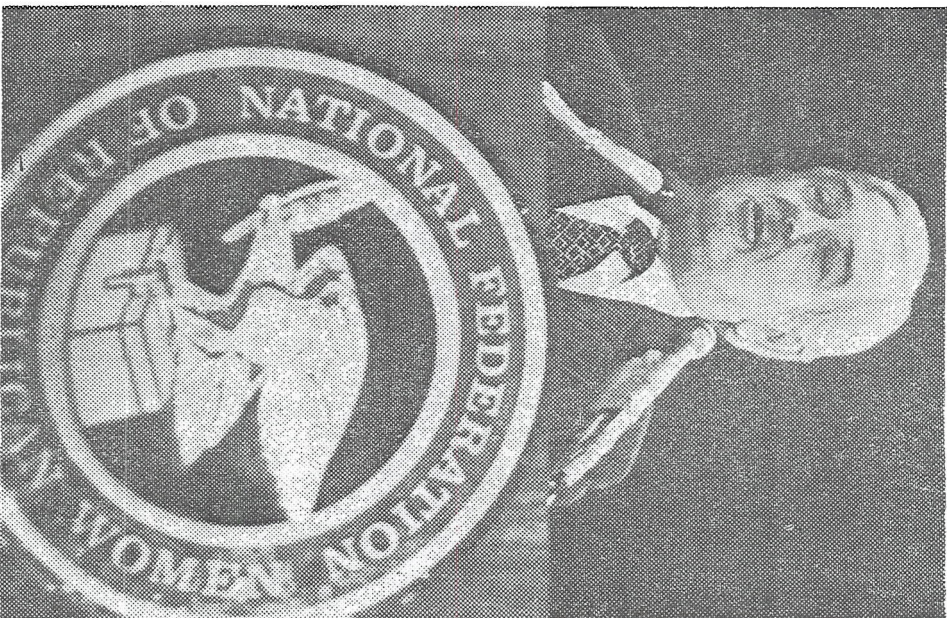
Her friend, Jackie Hunt, said, "He'll look you in the eye, and Nixon won't."

When the President was mentioned, Lila Pagliotti joined in, "I think he's throwing Agnew to the wolves, with someone else doing the dirty work."

It's So Sad

As they ended their annual convention here yesterday, these women seemed to reflect the predominant feelings of the national federation, a generally conservative group of grassroots party workers. They strongly support Mr. Agnew's determination to stay in office, and they want to believe his contention that he did not accept kickbacks in exchange for personal favors.

But there was forlornness in their cheers, and in the waving signs that said "Spiro Is Our Hero." The women know he has been hurt by the investigation in Baltimore, and they agree with the New York delegate who mourned: "It's so damaging to his prestige. It's so sad."



John B. Connally, former Treasury Secretary, addressing Republican women's group in Los Angeles on Friday.

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that the scandals are certain to hurt.

John B. Connally, the former Texas Democratic Governor, obviously packs plenty of political sex appeal, and Republicans are grateful for any converts. But many delegates remain suspicious of his motives for joining the G. O. P., and want to reserve judgment. He received a lukewarm reception on Friday. *2 3 SEP*

In Washington today, Congressmen who might yet have to sit in judgment on Mr. Agnew were reluctant to comment on his speech. But among the women here the praise was virtually unanimous.

Fair Play

The basic view was that in the name of fair play, Mr. Agnew should not be prejudged. "As a lawyer's wife," said Constance McGregor of Worcester, N. Y., "I must assume that if he is indicted, and proven guilty, he has to resign." But not until then, no sir!

Added Dorothy Goodnight, of Long Beach, Calif.: "I like the fact that he came out and fought this thing. I think it is the attitude of a man who is innocent."

This is tied in with a vague feeling that someone is out to "get" Mr. Agnew, and the delegates cheered mightily for his attacks on the Justice Department and the press. They were a bit puzzled about the fact that the Justice Department is run by Republicans, but a few agreed with Shirley Fuller, Carson City, Nev., who said, "I feel that it's some subversive power that is behind all this."

In addition, these women feel vast sympathy for Mr. Agnew and his family. They consider him a "down-to-earth" person

who has not let power go to his head.

"We identify with him, we think of him as being like us," said Joan Beck, a delegate from Mr. Agnew's home state of Maryland. "The President is reserved and aloof. It's hard to imagine him going out and picking up a six-pack of beer." Some women also feel that the allegations against Mr. Agnew are not that heinous.

"It all happened years ago, it shouldn't be brought up now," said one New Yorker. Added another: "What's money? Everyone has done that sort of thing one way or another."

A New Jersey delegate insisted that any prosecutor could find something shady in the financial affairs of most public officials, and she thought it was a "clever move" by Mr. Agnew to seek a hearing before Congress. "There's not one person up there that doesn't have some skeleton in his closet, that's where he'll win," the woman asserted.

Not Perfect

The warmth expressed toward Mr. Agnew was in contrast to a coolness toward President Nixon. "If old Dick would only come down off his complained one California delegate.

These local party workers have still not forgotten last year when the Committee for the Re-election of the President drained out much of the available political money. "Nixon didn't give a damn what happened locally," another New Jersey delegate complained.

Even George Bush, the national chairman, said that, from a political viewpoint, the White House handling of Watergate "had not been perfect." And a number of women here felt that the President

should release the secret White House tapes.

In general, the delegates were bitter about Watergate, particularly about the way they feel the press and the Senate committee have continued to keep the issue alive. One delegate bought up the political button that says "Nobody Drowned at Watergate," and then theorized:

"Watergate was bad, but it wasn't nearly as bad as what happened at Chappaquiddick. Politics have been dirty since the year one. So now everyone is having a heyday, and I'm for all the defendants. As far as Howard Baker being a sex symbol, I must be getting awfully old."