

Nixon's Search For a New No. 2

By Rudy Abramson
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Washington

Vice President Agnew's resignation yesterday came like a thunderbolt, threatening Republican party unity and setting the spark for yet another struggle between President Nixon and the Democratic-controlled Congress.

Speculation on a successor — who will be nominated by the president and who must be approved by both houses of Congress — was instantaneous.

The president set about his task immediately. He canvassed Republican congressional leaders at a late-afternoon meeting and Speaker Carl Albert (Dem.-Okla.) and Sen.

Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (Dem.-Mont.) in early evening.

GOP Chairman George Bush wired all members of the republican national committee for their recommendations while White House chief of staff Alexander Haig sent telegrams to the 19 republican governors for their suggestions.

ENVELOPES

Senate minority leader Hugh Scott (Rep.-Pa.) told republican senators to submit up to three names in sealed envelopes by this afternoon. "The envelopes I deliver will not be shown to anyone," Scott said.

Both Scott and Mansfield said they anticipated a presidential decision before the end of the week. "There will not be any undue delays," Scott said. "The country will not be in suspense for too long."

Mansfield said he proposed two names and that Albert added another. While declining to name them, Mansfield said none is a po-

tential 1976 GOP presidential candidate but that all would be confirmed by both houses with no trouble.

CRITERIA

Scott said Mr. Nixon asked them to help him make the decision, commenting, "the president has an open mind. He has simple criteria — a man or a

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woman, a person able to be president, a person who has the kinds of qualities to be president."

Both Scott and Mansfield described the president's mood as somber. "He was very concerned and distressed about Agnew in a truly humanitarian way," Mansfield said. However, both said he was in firm control of the political situation. "He seemed to be on top of everything," Mansfield said. "The president was very strong, much in control of the situation."

...COURSES

Political observers generally agreed Mr. Nixon has essentially three choices: to pick a strong contender to succeed him in office in 1977, to recoup prestige for his embattled administration by naming an elder statesman, or to go for a lesser known young republican's compromise.

Whichever course the president chooses to deal with the immediate problem, Agnew's departure seemed certain to speed jockeying for position among ambitious republicans who have remained disinterested still because of Agnew's legal problems and the president's Watergate travail.

Speculation over possible successors has been heavy in Washington ever since the disclosure that Agnew was under investigation on criminal charges in Maryland.

The list has grown despite legal maneuvering to keep Agnew in office, and his personal declaration that he would not resign, even if indicted.

CONNALLY

Guessing on a new Vice President centered immediately on former Texas Governor John B. Connally, the Democrat turned Republican, who served for a time as the Nixon Administration's Treasury secretary, and who recently has acted like a serious candidate for the GOP presidential nomination three years hence.

"I don't know who the President is going to pick, but I'm not a candidate and I'm not going to be one," Connally told a reporter in Houston. "I have not talked with the President, and I don't know that I will." The former Texas governor said he had no advance word of Agnew's action.

Others, who have been considered presidential possibilities and who are now mentioned as potential Agnew successors, include:

- New York Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller, who has sought the GOP nomination without success since 1968.

- California Governor Ronald Reagan, a favorite of the party conservatives who had rallied behind Agnew.

- Sen. Howard H. Baker (Rep.-Tenn.), who rose from relative obscurity to national prominence as vice chairman of the Senate Watergate investigating committee.

- Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson, who served as Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare and as Secretary of Defense, before being called on to take over the Justice Department.

- Melvin Belli, former defense secretary and long-time Republican Congressman, brought into the White House as the President's chief Domestic adviser after the departure of John D. Erlichman.

- Sen. Charles Percy (R-Ill.), member of the liberal wing of the party, long believed to harbor Presidential aspirations.

Republican elders, considered by Democrats to be no threat to them as GOP presidential candidate in 1976 either because of age, lack of White House ambitions, or

other reasons, include:

- William R. Rogers, the recently resigned secretary of state.

- Representative Gerald R. Ford (Rep.-Mich.), house minority leader, who has hinted he does not plan to remain much longer in Congress.

- John Shefman Cooper, retired Republican Senator from Kentucky, now in private law practice in Washington.

- Sen. Barry Goldwater (Rep.-Ariz.), who lost the Presidential election to Lyndon B. Johnson in 1964.

- William Scranton, former Republican Governor of Pennsylvania, who staged a late effort to defeat Goldwater for the 1964 GOP nomination.

among younger, lesser-known Republicans who have received prominent mention are:

- Donald Rumsfeld, a former Congressman, former director of the office of economic opportunity, former counsel to the President, and now ambassador to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

- George Bush, former Texas Congressman, defeated Senate candidate, former ambassador to the United Nations, and now chairman of the GOP national committee.

- William D. Ruckelshaus, former director of the Environmental Protection Agency, former acting director of the FBI, and now deputy attorney general.

- Richard Lugar, the mayor of Indianapolis, Ind., sometimes referred to as the President's "favorite mayor," and once mentioned by Mr. Nixon as potential presidential timber.

Mansfield predicted that each house of Congress will vote on the nomination separately rather than convening a joint session. That decision will apparently be settled in a meeting between House and Senate leaders within the next few days.

He said the Senators yesterday's leadership meeting discussed the problem with "sobriety, dignity, and awareness of the historical moment."