

The Resignation

By Carroll Kilpatrick
Washington Post Staff Writer

President Nixon dealt with still another crisis yesterday as the man he twice chose to be his running mate resigned in the face of criminal charges that have divided an already shaken administration.

The President's day was one of apparently normal activity as Spiro T. Agnew, almost unknown to the nation five years ago, gave up the second highest post in the land to avoid what he said would be "a long, divisive and debilitating struggle in the Congress and in the courts."

Despite the personal tragedy and the national trauma, Mr. Nixon conducted a full day's business, appearing relaxed and at ease in public, while grim-faced aides sought to discount the humiliation to the President himself.

Now, for the first time in American history, a President will operate under Section 2 of the eight-year-old 25th amendment to the Constitution and nominate "a Vice President who shall take office upon confirmation by a majority vote of both houses of Congress."

Mr. Nixon promised to move "expeditiously" to nominate a successor. Late in the afternoon he invited suggestions from Republican

See AGNEW, A6, Col. 1

W. Post
10-11-73

Agnew Acts to Bar 'Struggle'

AGNEW, From A1

Party leaders throughout the country, asserting that he would consider all suggestions with an open mind.

The impact of the Agnew resignation could not be immediately measured, but observers were almost unanimous in describing it as one more damaging blow to confidence in the Nixon administration.

Nevertheless, Mr. Nixon in recent weeks has coolly kept his distance from the Vice President, while citing his friendship and confidence in him during the last five years.

The son of a Greek immigrant, Agnew, who rose to be governor of Maryland before being elected Vice President, is the second man to resign the office. John C. Calhoun resigned in 1832 to enter the Senate.

The President expressed deep sadness over the fall of his two-time running mate and praised his record as Vice President. He then summoned the Republican congressional leaders to the White House to discuss procedural questions and to request advice.

Later, he met with the Democratic leaders, House Speaker Carl Albert and Sen. Mike Mansfield. Until a successor takes office, Speaker Albert, a 65-year-old Oklahoman, is next in line of succession to the Presidency.

The Secret Service moved promptly to provide protection to Albert and announced that it would continue to protect Agnew for "a period of time."

Agnew's resignation was announced as he appeared in federal court in Baltimore to plead no contest to a single count of income tax evasion in 1967 while he was Maryland's governor.

First word of Agnew's decision came from Lisa Brown, a secretary in his office. A short time later, the White House released texts of letters between the President and Agnew and the latter's formal one-sentence resignation letter to Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger.

"I hereby resign the Office

of Vice President of the United States, effective immediately," the letter to the Secretary of State said.

The letter was delivered to Kissinger in his White House office at 2:05 p.m. and was effective immediately. A minute later, a copy of the letter and a longer letter to the President were handed to Alexander M. Haig Jr., White House staff chief, who in turn handed them to Mr. Nixon. ^{9 OCT}

Agnew informed the President of his intentions at a meeting of the two men held Tuesday night, grim-faced press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler said at a hastily called news conference shortly after 3 p.m.

The two men met alone in the Oval Office for about 40 minutes beginning at 6 p.m. Tuesday shortly before Mr. Nixon dressed for a state dinner he gave for President Felix Houphouet-Boigny of the Ivory Coast, Ziegler said.

"The President expressed his deep personal loss and appreciation for the Vice President's dedicated service to the nation over the last 4½ years," Ziegler said.

In all of Mr. Nixon's recent statements on Agnew, he carefully limited his praise of Agnew to his term of service as Vice President.

Mr. Nixon expressed his "sense of deep personal loss" and his "respect" for Agnew for putting the national interest above personal interests, Ziegler said.

"The President recognized the very painful decision" Agnew had made and expressed the hope that the American people will accord Agnew and his family the "compassion and understanding they deserve at this time," Ziegler said.

Asked whether the President's nomination of a successor would be a matter of days or weeks, Ziegler replied "not weeks."

When asked what role the President played in the denouement, Ziegler replied: "No direct role. The President and the Vice President have said that this is a personal decision only the Vice President could make."

Since it was disclosed in early August that Agnew was under investigation by federal prosecutors, speculation on a possible successor

has centered on former Treasury Secretary and Texas Governor John B. Connally, Gov. Nelson A. Rockefeller of New York, former Secretary of State William P. Rogers, former Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird and Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson.

However, there has been no word regarding Mr. Nixon's thinking, nor was there any informed speculation at the White House yesterday about a possible Agnew successor.

The political impact of the Agnew resignation could not be immediately measured, but few thought that it could do anything but further damage the man who twice picked him as a running mate and has himself been under the sharpest attack of any president in modern history.

If Mr. Nixon had not suffered the ignominy of Watergate, he might brush off the Agnew affair as doing little damage to his administration.

But even though the White House, according to many Agnew backers, connived at prodding the Vice President to quit—a change stoutly denied—there appeared to be little gain for the beleaguered President.

In last year's campaign, Democratic nominee George McGovern's choice of Sen. Thomas F. Eagleton (D-Mo.) as his running mate and the subsequent disclosure that Eagleton had undergone shock treatment for nervous depression may have contributed to McGovern's defeat at Mr. Nixon's hands.

The former Vice President wrote Mr. Nixon: "I have concluded that, painful as it is to me and to my family, it is in the best interests of the nation that I relinquish the vice presidency."

Declaring that it "has been a privilege to serve with you," Agnew concluded: "May I express to the American people, through you, my deep gratitude for their confidence in twice electing me to be Vice President."

In a "Dear Ted" letter, the President told Agnew he hoped he and his family "will be sustained in the says ahead by a well justified pride in all that you have contributed to the na-

tion by your years of service as Vice President."

"Your departure from the administration leaves me with a great sense of personal loss," the President wrote.

"You have been a valued associate throughout these nearly five years that we have served together. However, I respect your decision, and I also respect the concern for the national interest that led you to conclude that a resolution of the matter in this way, rather than through an extended battle in the courts and the Congress, was advisable in order to prevent a protracted period of national division and uncertainty."

Until the announcement, the President went through a full schedule of public activities without any hint of the dramatic news that was about to break.

Early in the day, he met for an hour and a half with Democratic and Republican congressional leaders to discuss the Middle East crisis. Ziegler said that there was no discussion of the Agnew matter at that meeting.

Later in the morning, Mr. Nixon presided at an East Room ceremony at which he presented Medals of Science to 11 scientists.

The President appeared to be at ease and in good humor at the ceremony, although twice he glanced at the table behind him to see how many more medals were awaiting presentation. His speech to the scientists, however, was unhurried and delivered without notes.

When Ziegler announced Mr. Nixon would move "expeditiously" to nominate a new Vice President, he said that the President "trusts that Congress will then act promptly to consider the nomination."

A bitter fight could break out in Congress on anyone Mr. Nixon nominates, for there are many potential Republican candidates for President in 1976 who might oppose the nomination of a rival candidate.

Likewise, Democrats, who now believe they are in an excellent posture for 1976 because of the Watergate and Agnew scandals, could object to the nomination of a man who would be a powerful rival three years from now.