

# Stunned Agnew Staff Reacts

By Lou Cannon

Washington Post Staff Writer

Most of the men and women who worked for Spiro T. Agnew believed in him, and they tried desperately to cling to their faith yesterday in Agnew's hour of trial. "We are all sad here," said Lisa Brown, the Vice President's secretary. "People were calling over the phone and crying and saying it can't be true."

But it was true.

Twelve days after Agnew had denounced the charges against him as the product of perjured testimony and as an attempt to destroy him with "malicious and outrageous news leaks, he quietly threw in the towel.

The announcement to the staff was made shortly after 2 p.m. in the Vice President's conference room by Brig. Gen. John Murphy Dunn, Agnew's military assistant.

"Our leader is today resigning his high office," Dunn began softly, and he then read Agnew's resignation statement. The announcement was greeted by a dead silence.

"We were stunned," said an aide afterward. "It was a very damaging blow."

That first shock was gradually replaced by other emotions. There was anger, some of it directed at the press but more of it at President Nixon for what was seen as forcing his Vice President out. And there were tears. At least on the first day, however, there seemed surprisingly little resentment at the actions of Agnew, who had for two months proclaimed his innocence publicly to the nation and privately to the President and his own staff.

"It's a sad day for the country," said Peter Malatesta, a vice presidential special assistant and Agnew loyalist who had long advocated an outspoken course.

The final negotiations leading to the Agnew resignation began Friday night and were resumed in earnest on Saturday morning. A source close to Agnew who is familiar with the negotiations said the Justice Department initially took a much harder position than the final settlement with the key issue the question of whether there would be a recommendation for a jail term.

The jail issue, this source said, ultimately became part of a package and "when that fell in line, other things fell in line."

A chosen few of Agnew's aides had suspected that the

THE WHITE HOUSE

October 10, 1973

The Honorable Henry A. Kissinger  
The Secretary of State  
Washington, D. C. 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I hereby resign the Office of Vice President of the United States, effective immediately.

Sincerely,

/s/ Spiro T. Agnew

October 10, 1973

Dear Mr. President:

As you are aware, the accusations against me cannot be resolved without a long, divisive and debilitating struggle in the Congress and in the Courts. 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.

Accordingly, I have today resigned the Office of Vice President of the United States. A copy of the instrument of resignation is enclosed.

It has been a privilege to serve with you. May I express to the American people, through you, my deep gratitude for their confidence in twice electing me to be Vice President.

Sincerely,

/s/ Spiro T. Agnew

The President  
The White House  
Washington, D. C.

October 10, 1973

Dear Ted:

The most difficult decisions are often those that are the most personal, and I know your decision to resign as Vice President has been as difficult as any facing a man in public life could be. Your departure from the Administration leaves me with a great sense of personal loss. 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.

As Vice President, you have addressed the great issues of our times with courage and candor. Your strong patriotism, and your profound dedication to the welfare of the Nation, have been an inspiration to all who have served with you as well as to millions of others throughout the country.

I have been deeply saddened by this whole course of events, and I hope that you and your family will be sustained in the days ahead by a well-justified pride in all that you have contributed to the Nation by your years of service as Vice President.

Sincerely,

/s/ Richard Nixon

The Vice President  
Executive Office Building  
Washington, D. C.

Vice President's letters of resignation and the President's reply. The official instrument of resignation, as required by United States law, is the letter to the Secretary of State, referred to in letter to Mr. Nixon.

decision was coming ever since Oct. 3 when, on the eve of an Agnew speech in Chicago, an order went out from the Vice President to his staff that no more statements were to be made in his behalf. The immediate effect of this order was to muzzle J. Marsh Thomson the hardpressed Agnew press secretary, who had been predicting a "fighting speech" by Agnew in Chicago.

Agnew's speech was instead a vaguely worded de-

fense of presidential policies with scarcely any reference to his own case. Reporters who had been covering him were struck by the contrast between the defiant, independent Agnew of Los Angeles and the mild-mannered, loyalist Agnew of Chicago five days later.

"With the advantage of hindsight, it seems clear that the basic decision to quit had already been made when the Chicago speech was given," one aide said yesterday.

But even hindsight offers no ready explanation of why Agnew steadfastly maintained his innocence despite his knowledge of the evidence against him.

That explanation may be forthcoming when the former Vice President makes his own report of the American people. Leaving a Randallstown, Md., funeral home a few hours after his resignation, Agnew said he would make a public statement within the next few days.

What the public statement would be, or in what form, Agnew did not say. But his own view of the ordeal of the past few months is perhaps best described by a phrase used by Agnew in his Sept. 29 speech in Los Angeles, when he said he had been "living in purgatory."

On Aug. 6, the Wall Street Journal informed Agnew's office that it was publishing a story stating he was under investigation by federal prosecutors for four possible felony violations. The next day Agnew met with the President in a meeting that aides for both men later described as acrimonious despite White House reports to the contrary.

Two days after he first learned of the impending publication of the investigation story, Agnew called a press conference to denounce the allegations against him as "damned lies" and to proclaim that "a Vice President can stand on his own two feet."

In the weeks that followed, while the White House dragged its feet on an all-out statement of presidential confidence, Agnew began to attack those he held responsible for leaking the stories about the investigation. On Aug. 21 he went on national television to demand an investigation of news leaks.

"This is a clear and outrageous effort to influence the outcome of possible grand jury deliberations," Agnew said then.

At his first press conference in five months, President Nixon on Aug. 22 joined Agnew in condemning the news leaks. But he also established a careful context for his support of the Vice President, explaining that his confidence was founded "particularly in the performance of the duties that he has had as Vice President and as a candidate for Vice President."

On Sept. 18 The Washing-

# With Tears and Anger

ton Post published a story quoting an unnamed senior Republican figure as saying that it was "99½ per cent certain" that Agnew would resign and "probably this week."

The Vice President declined to respond to the story, issuing a statement through Thomson that he did not comment on "source stories." The following day, however, Thomson conceded that the Vice President may have discussed resigning when he was in a "dark mood."

On Sept. 26, The Washington Post published a source story which said that Justice Department officials had offered to allow Agnew to plead guilty to a minor offense if he would resign—almost precisely what happened yesterday. Agnew flatly denied at that time that his lawyers had initiated any plea bargaining.

But Agnew's strongest statements were reserved for a Sept. 29 speech in Los Angeles before a cheering, sign-waving crowd at the National Federation of Republican Women.

After denouncing Assistant Attorney General Henry E. Petersen as a source of the "malicious and outrageous" news leaks against him, Agnew accused Petersen of attempting to claim him as a "trophy" to rescue a reputation damaged in Petersen's investigation of the Watergate case.

Proclaiming his innocence

above the din of the Los Angeles Convention Center, Agnew shouted: I will not resign if indicted! I will not resign if indicted!"

The Republican women waved signs which said "Spiro my Hero," and he was indeed a hero to that convention. He was, in fact, a considerable hero to most of his partisans, and there was much talk in his office and among his supporters on Capitol Hill these past eight weeks that Agnew should not resign and give comfort to his enemies.

But it was not his political

enemies who appeared to have done Agnew in. The investigation was launched by a Republican prosecutor, supported by a Republican Attorney General, backed by a Republican President.

The ultimate irony is that Agnew, the most controversial and partisan vice president since Richard Nixon, was finally done in not by his adversaries among those he once called "liberal elitists," but by members of the administration he had staunchly defended for five years.

The realization that Ag-

new had been removed from office by members of his own party grew slowly yesterday among his still-loyal staff members. When Dunn announced the impending resignation, he said that efforts would be made to keep the staff employed.

But no one at Agnew's office seemed to be sure just who their employer was, now.

"We're not sure we'll have much more to do with the veep or not," one aide said. "He's not Vice President anymore."