

Members of Congress, Stunned by Agnew's

ALBERT IS GIVEN MORE PROTECTION

Leaders Doubt on Handling Succession—Speaker Says Decision Is Up to Nixon

By MARJORIE HUNTER

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Oct. 11—Congress was thunderstruck today by Vice President Agnew's resignation.

Debates were under way in both the Senate and the House when the news first broke in early afternoon. Stunned members rushed to the news tickers in the cloakrooms and lobbies, shaking their heads in disbelief.

Within minutes, several additional Capitol policemen were assigned to the corridor just outside the office of House Speaker Carl Albert of Oklahoma, who will be next in line to the Presidency until a new Vice President is chosen.

Even leaders of Mr. Agnew's own party said they had no inkling that he was planning to resign.

Just this morning, Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona, the Republican candidate for President in 1964, had assured a breakfast meeting of House Republican conservatives that Mr. Agnew would not resign.

'You're Kidding'

Representative Gerald R. Ford of Michigan, the House Republican leader, was sitting in the House, listening to a debate on home rule for the District of Columbia, when a colleague told him the news.

"The Vice President has resigned," Representative Elford R. Cedarberg, Republican of Michigan, whispered.

"You're kidding," Mr. Ford replied.

Scarcely seconds later, a House employe handed Mr. Ford two letters — one formal, the other signed "Ted" — in which Mr. Agnew disclosed his resignation.

Mr. Ford said later that his first reaction was one of disbelief, his second was one of "great sadness." He said he had no prior knowledge that Mr. Agnew had planned to resign.

Mr. Cedarberg had learned of Mr. Agnew's decision while attending a meeting of Senate-House conferees on an appropriations bill. Senator Mike Mansfield of Montana, the Senate Democratic leader, had just received a hand-delivered letter from Mr. Agnew and he shared it with the other conferees.

Later, asked for his reaction, Senator Mansfield replied: "I just don't know what to say."

Senator Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania, the Senate Republican leader, was in his office, just down the corridor from the Senate floor, when he received his hand-delivered letter from Mr. Agnew.

Later, Senator Scott issued a statement: "I admire him as a man. I admired and respected him as a Vice President. I recognize his courage and dedication to his country in making his decision."

Meetings in Capitol

Senator Mansfield and Senator Scott met later today with leading members of the Senate, Judiciary and rules committees, each with jurisdiction in considering a nomination submitted by President Nixon.

Senator Mansfield said he believed that the matter might be handled by the Rules Committee, headed by Senator Howard W. Cannon, Democrat of Nevada, but that the Senate leadership would meet again tomorrow to discuss the matter further.

There was confusion, too, in the House as to how to handle the Vice Presidential succession.

"After all, we'll be charting new ground," Mr. Ford said.

Representative Peter W. Rodino Jr., Democrat of New Jersey, who is chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, said he was not sure how the matter should be handled but resumed there would be hearings "by an appropriate committee" once the President submits a nomination.

Speaker Albert, at a news conference in late afternoon, declined to comment on what procedure would be used by the House.

'In Hands of President'

"I learned of the Vice President's resignation today with surprise and shock," he said. The Vice President advised me of his action by letter. Under the Constitution, the matter is now in the hands of the President and I have no further comment."

Asked about a report that he had assured freshman Democrats a few weeks ago that he would favor selection of a Vice Presidential nominee only if that person agreed not to run for President in 1976, Speaker Albert replied: "I have never said that."

Mr. Agnew's resignation apparently short-circuited Senate plans to take a two-week recess, starting this weekend. Senator Mansfield said it was "now doubtful" that the Senate would recess.

Within hours after the first reports of the Vice President's resignation were confirmed, mimeograph machines were pouring out statements from Congressional offices, expressing shock and surprise over the development.

OCTOBER 11, 1973

Move, Desert Floor for News Tickers