

'And Then They Knifed Him'

Agnew Resignation Evokes Some Bitter Views

By Donald P. Baker
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Some spoke bitterly yesterday of Spiro T. Agnew.

Elaine Tutman, a restaurant inspector in Prince George's County, called him "a hatchet man who served Mr. Nixon well" and said his resignation is "just another example of a loyal employee being rewarded."

"He made the speeches, called the names, and then they knifed him when they wanted to get Connally in as vice president," said the 38-year-old inspector, who prefers to be called Ms. Tutman.

She said she believed Agnew's fall is the result of a Nixon-backed conspiracy "that goes back to the Justice Department." She was among persons interviewed at random yesterday at three shopping centers in suburban Maryland.

Others had a far different opinion.

Three young Forestville mothers who were shopping at Iverson Mall with their infants believe Agnew has been unfairly punished.

"There are ghosts in everyone's closet," said Lana Sylier, 25, the wife of a D.C. police officer. "Many other officeholders have done the same thing."

"He took money. So what?" said Kathy Erdner, 22, the wife of an Air Force man stationed at Andrews Air Force Base.

Gayle Arigo, 25, agreed that Agnew is "a nice guy. Money talks. It turns a lot of heads. They should merely have spanked his hand, told him not to do it again. But he should not have resigned. He's a character."

Mrs. Sylier said, "Everyone cheats on their taxes. Of course I do. The government takes so much money from you, if I can take some of it back, I will."

Mrs. Erdner wondered "why Watergate is being exposed, after this kind of thing has been going on for centuries."

Mrs. Arigo suggested that "if the news media had been as active in Lincoln's day, he would never have been so pontifical."

All three women agreed they might vote for Agnew if he ran again for public office.

Marjorie Waddell is "beginning to think the country should listen more to its young people." She said her teensage daughter is "very concerned" and would make "a good, honest politician."

Mrs. Waddell, of 3701 Silver Park Dr., Suitland, thinks that "two-thirds of our politicians are corrupt." As a result, she said, "the big guys are taking over the country. Small contractors are being pushed out. The whole mess disgusts me."

Mrs. Waddell said she supported Agnew as governor "and thought the world of him. He kept the D.C. riots from coming across the border."

But she was concerned about his punishment. She recalled that a funeral director in her hometown in Virginia "went to prison for six months because he failed to pay a few thousand dollars in taxes. He was a nice person but he paid. And it ruined his business and his life."

"Back in Illinois we feel as if he's let his friends down," Ross said. "Who else do we have to look up to if not our leaders? This whole Watergate thing has hurt the country, crippled the economy."

Stanley Collinge, a retired professional golfer who lives at 6100 Wilmet Dr., Bethesda, thinks that "the people who greased Agnew's palms should be prosecuted too. They're just as guilty."

"It takes a weak man to accept a bribe," Collinge said, "but they benefited too."

Helen Fox, a Silver Spring housewife, suggested to a reporter that "if it had been you, the sentence wouldn't have been so light."

President Nixon "didn't need any more trouble," she said, but now that he must choose a new Vice President, Mrs. Fox nominated Sen. Sam Ervin. "He's real cute."

Tom Newman, 24, a carpenter from Gaithersburg, believes Agnew "should have gone to jail." Newman wants the investigation to continue.

He characterized Agnew as "just another guy Nixon chose who screwed up."

Thomas Lambert, a retired ice cream company

salesman who has moved from Washington to Port Tobacco, Md., "can't understand why we don't get some of the other crooks. Most politicians are corrupt and Maryland is the crookedest state in the U.S. Lots more of them belong in jail."

Although he did not defend Agnew, Lambert wondered "why your biased paper doesn't take after some of the other bad guys—Dowdy, Brewster, (State Sen.) Mitchell."

While he is disappointed with Agnew's actions, Lambert remains "glad I didn't vote for that yellow-bellied McGovern."

One of the more optimistic persons interviewed was Joan Lally of Greenbelt, who said she doesn't think "the majority of public officials take bribes."

But then there was Bruce Lockhart, a Chevy Chase salesman, who said flatly, "All politicians are crooked. The best we can hope for is that some of them are crooked for the people."