

Agnew Cleans Out His Desk;

By Lou Cannon

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Spiro Theodore Agnew returned to his suite in the Executive Office Building as a private citizen yesterday.

He cleaned out his desk, and, according to one aide, talked about making a final statement to the American people on national television. The aide said he felt sorry for Agnew.

"It's been handled as gracefully as possible," declared J. Marsh Thomson, Agnew's press secretary. "He still has the key to his office."

The 31 Agnew staff members are still on the payroll, but many already are looking for new jobs. Nonetheless, the concern of Agnew aides for their own futures was overshadowed yesterday by their sympathy for the man who had loudly proclaimed his innocence for two months before his quiet concession of wrongdoing Wednesday.

When the Watergate case broke in full force last March, many of the silent Nixon administration critics of H.R. (Bob) Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman came forward with their own stories after those two principal presidential assistants were no longer on the White House staff.

But loyalty remains a watchword in the Agnew camp. Several aides continued to express the hope that the deposed Vice President would call a staff meeting and explain the discrepancies between his statements of the past two months and his action Wednesday.

In the meantime, Agnew's schedule for the month was canceled.

"Everything is off and we all start from scratch," Thomson said. "We tear up the schedule. He's operating as a private citizen now."

Agnew worked in his former office from 9:30 a.m. to noon yesterday, then left for Randallstown, Md., to attend the funeral of his 67-year-old half-brother, W. Roy Polard.

Agnew said nothing to reporters at the funeral. But he appeared tanned and confident, in contrast to his wife, Judy, who looked pale and drawn and wore dark glasses.

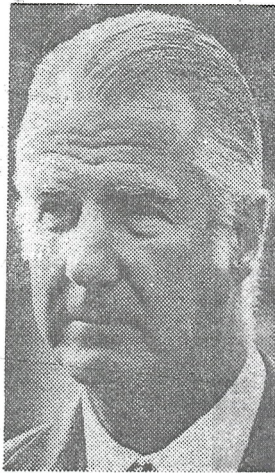
Rev. Richard Wells Russell, the Methodist minister who presided at the funeral, said that Mrs. Agnew had corrected a visitor at the funeral home Tuesday who referred to the problems encountered by the Vice President.

"The former Vice President," she said.

White House officials made it clear yesterday, however, that they intend to continue treating Agnew with the dignity due the office of Vice President. Ronald L. Ziegler, the White House press secretary, said that Agnew went off the government payroll at the time of his resignation at 2:05 p.m. Wednesday but would continue to have Secret Service protection and access to his office for a "reasonable and appropriate period."

Deputy White House press secretary Gerald L. Warren said that "every possible courtesy and help" would be extended to Agnew in the transition period.

These courtesies did not go unnoticed by the Agnew staff, which previously had been bitter at Agnew's supposed ill-treatment by the White House. Yesterday it was different, particularly



SPIRO T. AGNEW
 ... staff sympathetic

after the press conference held by Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson.

This new appreciation of Richardson apparently re-

Staff Loyal, Sympathetic

flected Agnew's own view.

Until yesterday, Richardson had been something of an anti-hero to the Agnewites, who considered him responsible for many of the news leaks about Agnew's case. All this was changed after the press conference, which Thomson said "reflected compassion and was a credit to Attorney General Richardson."

Asked about Richardson's comment that he hoped there would be no Maryland prosecution of Agnew, Thomson said:

"My overall impression is that it showed largeness of spirit and compassion for a man already grievously affected by a successful prosecution."

Other aides expressed similar sentiments.

One of them, special assistant David Keene, said that Agnew "had been punished a lot more than many

people who have technically received heavier sentences."

"You have to be a really heartless SOB to want him to suffer more," Keene said. "There are all kinds of suffering and all kinds of punishment, and he's gone through hell during the past few months."

Another aide, who asked not be identified, said that Agnew would be regarded as "a crook" years from now after people of lesser prominence had been forgiven for their crimes. Accordingly, said this aide, there was no purpose in also sending him to prison.

The specific event canceled by Agnew for this weekend was a Friar's Club appearance in Los Angeles, the city in which two weeks ago he proclaimed his innocence to a cheering crowd of Republican women and pledged that he would not resign even if indicted.

One of the women who was present at that gathering said yesterday that Agnew had come over to her table and personally reiterated his innocence. She called party officials in her home state yesterday and expressed indignation at Agnew's remark.

The situation on the Agnew staff was described by Thomson as one of "limbo."

Agnew aides are actually on two government payrolls, a Senate payroll deriving from the Vice President's duties in presiding over that body, and a White House payroll.

Although no one had it in writing, all of Agnew's aides were told by Brig. Gen. John M. Dunn, Agnew's military assistant, that they would remain on the payroll for the time being. Dunn and administrative assistant Arthur Sohmer appeared to be nominally in charge of

the staff, but they issued few orders yesterday.

"We're all pretty much on our own," one aide said.

Dunn had been rising in importance on the Agnew staff, partly because of his personal relationship with former military man, White House chief of staff Alexander M. Haig. When it came time for Agnew to quit, it was Dunn who made the announcement to the staff.

After he told them of Agnew's impending resignation, Dunn cautioned staff members "not to panic" and said that efforts would be made to find jobs for them.

But most of Agnew's aides anticipated that they would be leaving as soon as a new Vice President is chosen.

"He will want his own staff," said one Agnew aide who remains loyal to the former Vice President. "He wouldn't be much of a man if he didn't."