

Transcript of the Attorney General's News

Following is a transcript of a news conference in Washington yesterday by Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson and United States Attorney George Beall of Maryland as recorded by The New York Times. Some questions have been paraphrased because portions of them were inaudible.

OPENING STATEMENT

Mr. Richardson: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen of the press. I wish to make it clear at the outset that it is the purpose of this press conference simply to clarify matters which may have been left somewhat less than clear with regard to the proceedings by which we reached this point.

My office has received numerous inquiries from you and I have not been in a position until now to make myself available to try to answer them. I emphatically believe that it would not serve any meritorious interest to continue to debate charges and countercharges. Our purpose should be to put the matter to rest.

There are two points that I made in court before Judge Hoffman yesterday which I would like to underscore this morning. The first relates to my strong hope that the American people understand and support what has been done. I said yesterday the agreement between the parties now before the court is one which must be just and honorable and which must be perceived to be just and honorable not simply to the parties, but above all to the American people.

From the outset of the negotiations which have culminated in these proceedings, the Department of Justice has regarded as an integral requirement in any agreement, a full disclosure of the surrounding circumstances, for only with knowledge of these circumstances can the American people fairly judge the justice of the outcome.

Second, I wish to urge consideration and compassion again for the Vice President, who has rendered a high service by resigning and relieving the nation of a prolonged and potentially disastrous period of anguish and uncertainty.

I'm firmly convinced that in all the circumstances leniency is justified. I'm keenly aware first of the historic magnitude of the penalties inherent in the Vice President's resignation from his high office and his acceptance of a judgment of conviction for a felony.

To propose that a man who has suffered these penalties should in addition be incarcerated in a penal institution, however briefly, is more than I, as head of the Government prosecuting team, can recommend or wish.

Finally, I would like to commend the government prosecutors United States Attorney Beall, and Assistant United States Attorneys Skolnick, Baker and Liebman for their tenacious pursuit of justice and their wise counsel. Although they did not always agree with me, particularly with regard to the painful issue of sentencing, I know that they were at all times motivated by the highest regard for the public interest.

I would in addition like especially to commend Assistant Attorney General Peterson for his courageous and distinguished service in this case. The characteristics of fair and fearless prosecution of justice have been the hallmark of his more than two decades of service to the nation.

I believe Mr. Stewart of Reuters has the first question.

QUESTIONS

Q. What purpose was served by your spreading on the record all of the evidence which you had amassed, had you gone ahead to try him on extortion and bribery. I think many people see this is sort of piling on somebody that's already down.

A. As I said yesterday in court and as I have repeated just now, it has been regarded by the Department of Justice from the outset as essential to any agreement that there be full disclosure of the surrounding circumstances including the evidence assembled by the government during the course of its investigation. We have had, unfortunately, over recent months a sense that there has been a cover-up in some situations of facts which the public was entitled to know. And in order to achieve and enhance the public confidence in our institutions and justice and the administration of justice, it had seemed to us in the Department of Justice essential, as I said, that the American people be in a position themselves to judge the basis on which this matter has been handled.

This has been the sole reason for the disclosures that we have made and I would emphasize the fact not only was this part of the agreement that it was understood and accepted by attorneys for the Vice President and by the Vice President himself, and with the concurrence of the court, the statement that you referred to was entered into the record of the court proceedings themselves.

Q. Mr. Attorney General, will you tell us precisely what role President Nixon may have played in the decisions in this case, in particular, did the President expressly approve the entering into plea bargaining? Did he suggest parameters, limits or details of the Justice Department's position in that bargaining? Did he expressly approve in advance the final settlement?

A. The President was kept, of course, fully informed at all times. He fully approved each of the major steps that were taken in the course of these negotiations. He did not participate in the negotiations as such. He had, of course, as President of the United States, to be satisfied that the essential elements of what was being done were consonant with the public interest.

Did He Suggest Elements

Q. The other part of my question—did he suggest any of those elements? Either by omission or by setting parameters or by express suggestion?

A. No, he did not. He was, of course, concerned as all of us were, with the potential consequences of a prolonged and agonizing trial of these issues of fact. And this was a concern, naturally, that he felt, as did the Vice President himself and those of us who have served in the Department of Justice.

Q. You've completed the criminal aspects of this; I understand, but there are some tax aspects that are still to

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be followed. Do you still intend to pursue those civil tax matters with all of the diligence you have been pursuing the criminal matters in light of the exposition of facts set out in your 40-page document?

A. These, Mr. Mollenhoff, are matters before the Internal Revenue Service of the Department of the Treasury. As Judge Hoffman pointed out yesterday, these are not matters that could be concluded in a criminal proceeding and they remain to be worked out, to be pursued further as between the Internal Revenue Service and the counsel for the Vice President.

Q. It is my understanding there is no statute of limitations on the civil aspects of this, and that Mr. Agnew could well be indebted to the Government for penalties of 50 per cent plus several hundred thousand dollars.

A. I would not care to speculate about the possible amounts or the question of whether or not there were penalties. These are not matters within the jurisdiction of the Department of Justice.

Q. Under the conspiracy act of 1970, Title 9, you have civil authority to act against any group or organization having demonstrated a pattern of racketeering activities. Do you intend to use this authority? A. No, this is not a situation any aspect of which, in my view, properly belongs within this scope of that statute.

One-Count Settlement

Q. The allegations in your 40-page document yesterday contained a lot more than one count of income tax evasion. Why did you settle for just one count?

A. Well, of course, the very essence of a negotiated plea is that each side yields something in order to achieve agreement. And while, if satisfying in terms of weight and substance to a grand jury, this evidence could have supported an indictment covering charges substantially more extensive than were covered in the single-count information. And in that event these would have been tried. The consequence of pursuing that course would, as I pointed out, inevitably have been to justify the Vice President in insisting that the Government be put to its proof.

That means, in other words, that we would have had to have very prolonged court proceedings or potential proceedings in the Congress by way of impeachment.

Q. Sir, could you tell us whether the Department initiated the plea bargaining or did Mr. Agnew and his lawyers. A. The Department did not initiate the plea bargaining. We were approached in the first instance — not only in the recent negotiations, but in the earlier period of negotiations that took place in September.

Q. Could you follow up that to describe for us the chronology of plea bargaining, when proposals were made, who made them, and, finally, how did the arrangement get made. You indicated that some of your aides did not agree with the deal on the sentence. Can you tell us exactly how this came about and how the deal was made?

Effort to Quash

A. There was a period of negotiations in September which failed to achieve agreement. Negotiations were resumed first by telephone on Saturday of this past weekend and then there was a meeting with counsel for the Vice President on Monday and with the judge, which was followed by an additional meeting with the judge and with counsel on Tuesday afternoon. And it was at that Tuesday afternoon meeting that the final provisions of the agreement were concluded.

Q. Are any individuals still subject to prosecution and incarceration.

A. Yes, they are. The 40-page statement filed with the court yesterday covers the terms of the understanding with the key witnesses on which the statement itself was based. It makes clear that none of these individuals were promised immunity from prosecution. There has been in the case of two understandings with respect to the plea that they would make, but in no instance has any individual been given any promise as to disposition of the case.

Q. Were any efforts made by the White House, by the Vice President or any other outsiders, to quash the in-

vestigation. A. No, there were no such efforts.

Q. When you said that the Department did not initiate plea bargaining, in early September—that you were approached,—who were you approached first by—directly or indirectly—counsel for Mr. Agnew or counsel for the White House?

A. The first call I had was a call from the President's counsel asking if I would be willing to meet with counsel for the Vice President.

Q. Under Mr. Agnew's unsupervised sentence, would he be allowed to leave the country?

A. I'm sure that the court would not want to impose any narrow restrictions. This is, of course, a matter for the court. But since the judge made clear that the probation would be unsupervised that, barring some change of circumstance, I suppose that Mr. Agnew would be free to live wherever he chooses.

Q. The President has repeatedly contended that these charges do not relate in any way to the conduct of the Vice President's office as Vice President and yet you developed sizeable information that they do. And that on at least two instances he was awarded —I'm sorry, he received \$2,500 for award of a G.S.A. contract and there was another instance in the 40-pages. Wasn't the President advised of this, or didn't he understand the reasoning you gave him when he said it.

A. He was aware that the investigation touched on this, the \$2,500 matter. But it was, of course, at the time when he learned of this at a very early stage in the investigative process and the charge could not, of course, be considered proven.

And so the President, in effect, was in a position in which it would have been unfair on his part to imply that he believed that there had been proof of wrongdoing by the Vice President in that capacity.

The Final Agreement

Q. In the final agreement, did you agree on the same penalties that you were holding out for in your original negotiations with the Vice President?

A. I don't want to go into real detail on the negotiations. I think that the public interest is better served by the result than it would be a blow by blow account of the discussions that went on among counsel.

So I'll simply say that as of the matter of disposition, that was deferred until such time as it became evident that the recommendation of this department would be regarded by the judge as important in the court to the disposition of the matter.

And so that question, therefore, was not squarely reached until after the meeting with Judge Hoffman on Monday and then finally disposed of at the subsequent meeting with him on Tuesday.

Q. It has been said there was disagreement about the terms of the agreement. A. No, I don't believe that. In the first place they had reached a firm view as to what the alternative would be. But clearly, this was a matter in which reasonable men, including attorneys, could disagree. And I fully respect their views.

Q. When did you first learn of the dimensions of the case, and when did you first discuss it with the President; and was it your feeling then that he had previously been aware of the investigation?

A. I first discussed it with the President early in August, and I had made members of his staff—first General Haig—aware of it in July. So that he therefore already knew something about the situation as the result of communications to him by General Haig.

No Evidence Withheld

Q. Had he known before July, do you believe? A. I think he was aware, in addition, before that that an investigation was underway because he had been so informed by the Vice President himself.

Q. Did you withhold some of the evidence against the former Vice President or has all the evidence that's come to your attention been made public. A. All of the evidence that has been developed on the basis that we believed would have been sufficient to submit to a grand jury—if a grand jury

were going to be asked to act on this matter as of Oct. 10.

Q. If something new comes up next week that you didn't know about, would you be limited in your prosecution in that area?

A. We would be limited with respect to anything of this kind that antedated the court proceedings yesterday.

Q. In other words, anything in the corruption and fraud area while he was executive officer in Baltimore County, Governor of Maryland, and Vice President. A. Yes.

Q. That would be barred, and anyone who comes forward now with new information would be turned aside, or would be sent to the Internal Revenue Service?

A. The Internal Revenue Service, of course, would only deal with civil aspects of the situation. So far as the Government's investigation is concerned, the Federal Government, and the things that have been touched on are uncovered in the course of that investigation, the matter is closed.

Q. We've been through a period unprecedented in American history. What do you believe the nation can learn from the Agnew case?

'Trust and Confidence'

A. I would hope first that the nation would feel that the process of criminal justice is one that it can trust and have confidence in. I would hope that it would feel that the interest of the nation has been placed first by all those concerned, including the Vice President himself.

I would hope that most fundamentally all of us would have confidence that our system works. Indeed, I think this is the most affirmative aspect of all that has taken place over recent months, all the disclosures, the investigations, the indictments. They have exposed the shoddy side of the governmental political process, but they have also demonstrated that the governmental political process is capable of uncovering these things, and uncovering them, taking proper action.



Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson discussing the prosecution of Spiro T. Agnew at news session in Washington yesterday. Seated at right is George Beall, U.S. Attorney in Maryland, where the action took place. United Press International

Q. Will the Vice President be called as a witness in any future criminal prosecutions? A. I don't know. He is certainly not immune from being called. As the judge said, other proceedings may, of course, involve his name or his role insofar as that is relevant to proceedings against someone else.

Q. Could I address a question to Mr. Beall? A. Yes.

Q. Mr. Beall, Mr. Richardson has already said that there were some disagreements between them and members of your staff over the question of sentencing. Did you or members of your staff feel that the sentence was too light, that Senator Agnew should have been given a prison sentence?

MR. BEALL: The members of my staff and I had ample opportunity to confer with Attorney General Richardson and Assistant Attorney General Peterson and other persons in the Department of Justice during the whole course of this investigation beginning, I think, with our first personal conference with the Attorney General on July 3.

The System in Maryland

We continually expressed our views as prosecutors, from our vantage point in Baltimore. We continually expressed our concerns about the case itself, the consequences of the case and so on.

And I think I can say in summary, that I could no better articulate the conclusion that was reached than the Attorney General already has. There was honest disagreement among reasonable men, reasonable attorneys, as to what result was proper.

But keep in mind that our vantage point in Baltimore was entirely different than the Attorney General's vantage point in Washington. There was argument over many different aspects of the whole negotiating process. And I think it would be inappropriate to single out any one particular item that came up during the discussion.

Q. In the summary of evidence, Mr. Agnew is quoted, I believe, as saying that he was following a system that had been practiced in Maryland, that he found in place, which suggests this question: Are you now investigating the present Maryland Administration of Governor Mandel and if you are not investigating, why not?

MR. BEALL: That's a good question.

The grand jury investigation which began officially in January of this year continues. There has already been action from that grand jury in the form of indictments of other public officials in Maryland, the specific parameters of the grand jury investigation is something that I would purposefully and dutifully like to avoid at this time. We have consistently taken the position notwithstanding your polite objections that grand jury proceedings are secret, that they should be kept from public view and we expect to maintain that posture but nonetheless to continue the investigation into bribery, corruption, kick-backs and political misconduct in the State of Maryland.

Q. You're not ruling it out? A. I can't rule anything out at this time because the investigation continues and, as I say, the parameters are impossible to precisely define.

Q. A follow-up question on that. There are indications similar symptoms are widespread in other states. Do you feel there is a need for similar investigations in other states and will the Justice Department undertake them?

MR. RICHARDSON: The Justice Department has in fact under Assistant Attorney General Peterson and United States Attorneys in other districts in the country conducted investigations and launched prosecutions arising out of political corruption. This has been

true to a very large extent for example in New Jersey, in New York, in Illinois and in a number of other states and certainly this is a continuing responsibility of the department.

Q. There's a persistent reference in the 40-page document to a close associate of Mr. Agnew, unnamed. Are we to infer from that that you are proceeding against him as an object of the investigation? A. I don't think it would be proper for me to suggest any inference to be drawn from that.

Q. For Mr. Beall. The County Executive of Baltimore County is already under indictment. You indicated at that time your investigation of corruption in Baltimore County was continuing. Is this realistic now to expect that additional indictments against public officeholders in Baltimore County?

Additional Criminal Charges

MR. BEALL: George, I would rather not get into the business of predicting what indictments may or may not come forth from the grand jury in the foreseeable future. I think that you can anticipate that if the investigation continues as I have said it would that there will be additional criminal charges lodged against the subject of the investigation. I'm presuming that the information that we presently have bears up under the microscopic eye of the grand jury proceedings.

Q. I would like to ask a question of Mr. Beall. Do you plan to use the Vice President in pursuing others after giving him immunity? Has there been any consideration of this?

MR. BEALL: I think the Attorney General answered that question essentially earlier.

Q. He did not answer the question as to whether the Vice President would be used in criminal activity. In other words are you giving him blanket immunity. In other words everybody who dealt with the Vice President?

A. The answer to the question is no. But as to whether there may be some discussions with particular persons involved in the investigation,

Q. That sort of information relative to others who were involved in this mess of corruption that goes back for 10 years? A. The investigation is still an open one as far as we are concerned and we have not yet firmly determined what persons may be spoken with and talked to in connection with that investigation.

Q. Mr. Attorney General, you said that the first contact you had on the negotiations was with counsel for the President. Which counsel for the President was that and did he indicate that he was acting at the President's behest?

MR. RICHARDSON: This was a call from Mr. Buzhardt. He did not indicate that he was acting at the President's behest.

Mr. Buzhardt has at various stages during the course of these negotiations served in a capacity of facilitating communications and this was his initial role as it was his continuing role from time to time.

Question on Leaks

Q. Regarding the charges that were made by Mr. Agnew against the Justice Department and particularly Mr. Peterson about stories that were leaked during the investigation of him, do you feel that the charges were justified and also would you tell us what your investigations of how this information was leaked turned out?

A. I do not feel that the charges were justified, certainly not in the terms set forth in the affidavit from Mr. Agnew's council filed in court, which charges a systematic campaign of leaks from the department. Our own investigation failed to identify any source of leaks in the department. Now obviously I cannot with total confidence assert that no one in the department said anything to a member of the press which could be characterized as a leak. I could only say first of all that we were unable to find anybody in the department who was the source of a leak and we are absolutely confident in any event that we were not responsible for a campaign of leaks.

We have been able to identify, as Mr. Pommerening's report makes clear a number of potential sources of information that found its way to the press outside the Department of Justice itself.

Indeed as my letter to the then Vice President in August made clear, there were many people outside of the department who had information including the witnesses themselves, who were, of course, the original source of our own information.

Q. Your name is mentioned as a possibility for the Vice Presidential nomination. Would you take that nomination if asked by the President?

A. No. I would not. I think it would be highly inappropriate for me as the Government accuser of the Vice President and who in his capacity as Attorney General has been responsible for bringing a criminal information against him and for the investigations that

brought about his resignation to me for one moment to consider it as a potential successor to him.

Q. I'd like to ask whether you had other evidence not contained here that you spelled out to the Vice President's attorneys during his more recent round of negotiations?

A. No, there were some references covering matters under continuing investigation but the investigation has terminated and the disclosures made to the court constitute, as I said earlier, a full summary of the Government's case on that basis.

Q. Is there anything in the agreement that could be considered as implicitly or explicitly preventing the prosecution by state authorities against Mr. Agnew, and in the event of a state prosecution, would you share any of your evidence with the state prosecutors?

A. To answer the first part of the question: No, there's nothing in the agreement that would prevent action by state prosecutors. The judge yesterday made this clear in summarizing for the record the substance of the agreement and the effect of the agreement. If a state prosecutor should initiate action we would then have to consider what steps to take. Of course the full summary filed with the court is already a matter of record.

My own hope would be that it would be considered by state prosecutors as it is by Federal prosecution that the public interest is now best-served by considering this matter to have been dealt with on a basis of fairness and justice in the public interest both state and Federal.

Q. Is there any reason at all to believe that Mr. Nixon knew of Mr. Agnew's misconduct prior to August, 1972?

A. I would be fully confident in asserting that the President had no reason. Of course, this is one of those instances where one is in effect asked to prove a negative. But the—aside from the Vice President's own mention of the fact that an investigation was under way and, of course, the information that came to the President shortly before Aug. 6, from General Haig, the President would not, in my judgment and belief, have had any reason to know.

Q. Did you use the background investigation by the F.B.I. or any others that might have reflected serious question against the Vice President's career, background material that might have been available in 1967 or 1968, to the President?

A. No, we did not. I think it's worthwhile to emphasize as has been stated before, and I think it's apparent on the face of the Government's disclosure in the case, that the development of this evidence arose out of an investigation of the activities of county officials in Baltimore County. Mr. Beall first informed me of the status of the county investigation on June 12 of this year.

At that point there was only one slight indication that evidence might point toward acts of wrongdoing on the part of the then Vice President. It was not until later that month that additional evidence was developed and not until July 3 that the investigation had reached a point where Mr. Beall and his associates felt that it was serious enough in scope so that I should be informed of it. They did inform me fully of it on that date.

Q. Mr. Attorney General, you say that the moral of this whole episode is that the public should have confidence in the system of justice. Is the public going to gather that if a man is high enough he gets off very lightly?

A. I think this is a feeling that some people may have and of course it was the awareness that this would be the reaction of—or might be the reaction of—some of my fellow citizens that led me to try to make as clear as I could in my statement to the court yesterday that the interests of justice as well as the interests of the public were better served in this instance by a disposition that did not involve confinement of the former Vice President in a penal institution. I can only say that I hope that these considerations prove persuasive to the majority of my fellow citizens.

Q. Do you consider that as far as the other targets of the grand jury goes that a precedent has been set in this case?

A. This is, of course, a matter for the court to consider in dealing with any subsequent offenders who may be brought before the court. I do believe that it is desirable that the case of other defendants related to this investigation as a whole should, if the District with the governments closest to the people?

Confidence Unshaken

Q. Does this investigation shake the confidence so often expressed in the President's revenue-sharing program with the governments closest to the people?

A. No, certainly not. All I need say on that score is that—mind you, that I came to the Federal Government under this Administration after a tour of duty as United States Attorney for the District of Massachusetts where my efforts were largely devoted to uncovering state-level corruption.

I was Attorney General in Massachusetts and in that capacity followed the period of tenure of Attorney General Brooke, who was largely involved in prosecution of Massachusetts corruption. And I had to deal with that again. And I have always felt that the surest way of eroding both the quality and the integrity of state and local governments is to deal with them on a basis that implies a lack of trust and that does not rest clear-cut accountability on them.

I think the best way to improve their quality is to make clear where the responsibility lies. In matters that are of direct and immediate concern to people and where it is important that their Government be responsive to them and sensitive to local needs.

Q. Will you give us your thoughts on this. Compassion for Mr. Agnew could have come at the end of the road rather than at the beginning of the road, and that a public trial could very well have brought reforms and the greatest deterrent to a repetition of this at any level in the future.

A. This is certainly a point of view

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that had to be weighed and considered. But, of course, the price of whatever gain might have been achieved in that direction would have been a prolonged anguish and uncertainty associated with the trial of an incumbent Vice President.

Q. Could you tell us when and in what manner the President approved the agreement that was entered in the courthouse yesterday? A. The President didn't pass on the agreement as such in specific terms and conditions. His was a role rather of approving the general direction and the fundamental basis upon which the matter was being handled.

Q. Did you present the outline of the agreement to him after it was reached Tuesday afternoon, and did he comment upon it or give it a clearance for you to go to in court? A. It was presented to him, I believe, by the Vice President himself on Tuesday evening. I did not make any presentation to him.

Q. Persons convicted of felonies in this country are commonly stripped of their civil rights, including the right to vote. Will this occur in Mr. Agnew's case?

A. He can continue to vote, according to the views of an assistant attorney general. There will be no consequence with respect to property rights and there would be no prohibition against his holding office under the Maryland Constitution.

Q. On the tax aspects of this matter, is there any evidence you have that shows that the Vice President paid any tax on the payoff money. In other words, any reports on the income in the earlier years?

A. The tax investigation which was going forward concurrently with the investigation of other aspects of this matter, have not been completed as of yesterday. In the first place, I cannot answer the question. In the second place, since it is now a civil matter pending before the Internal Revenue Service, it would be inappropriate in any event.

Q. The Justice Department was under a certain amount of pressure. Apparently senior Justice officials were supposed to have given sworn depositions yesterday. And I'm wondering if that fact had anything to do with the timing of the . . .

A. Not, certainly, as far as the Department of Justice is concerned. We were looking forward to the opportunity to give our depositions in this matter.

And I might remind you that all of us in the Department of Justice who had any knowledge whatsoever of this case have already subscribed and sworn to affidavits subject to the penalties of perjury. Those affidavits in each instance deny responsibility for being the source of any leaks. Mr. Lydon?

Q. In your concern for the anguish of a drawn-out proceeding, are you not subject to the charge of permissiveness yourself? And wouldn't he, in another

day, have called you permissive, even a permissive judge? And, secondly when you boil it all down, doesn't this amounts—have you not rendered a political bargain here rather than a criminal bargain? He's been allowed to get off without penalties except that he give up the office that apparently the White House always wanted him to give up for the last several months anyhow. In the end, is it not a political judgment rather than a prosecutorial judgment?

A. I think each individual will have to make up his or her own mind about the justice of this result. I believe, as I have said, that it is just, fair and honorable. I have insisted, and have done my best, with my colleagues, to assure that all the facts upon which the result was reached are publicly accessible.

As to the charge of permissiveness, all I can say, Chris, is that, so far any prosecuting role I've ever had, this would be the first time anybody has suggested that.

As to the political aspects about it, of course in the fundamental sense of the word "political," of course it's political. And we are dealing here with issues involving the Government of the United States of America. We are dealing with a situation involving a man next in line of succession—who was next in line of succession to the Presidency itself.

While the Middle Eastern crisis had no direct bearing on the outcome, it

certainly is a situation illustrative of the kind of problem that has to be faced in considering whether the national interest would be served if an indictment were returned and if the Vice President—as was his full right—had insisted upon a trial, either in the Congress, if the Congress had chosen to act, or by a jury of his peers.

Q. There was some thought before you mentioned that the first round of negotiations failed. The Vice President did not want to serve any time in jail. . . .

A. I don't think it would serve any useful purpose to go into this. The process of negotiation, of course, in a matter of this kind, is one in which there were strong interests represented by each side. And the result is one that I think represents a fair balance between those interests.

A Summary Description

Q. Did you inform the President of the details of the investigation as contained in your 40-page statement early on, in August or early September? In other words, when he said that nothing the Vice President did had any relation to his office of Vice President, he was in fact charged with committing a felony while he was in office.

I'm wondering when the President knew about this and what he based that statement on.

A. The President has never had more than a very summary description of the kinds of evidence developed by the Government investigation. He felt that

it was not appropriate for him to be informed of the details of the case.

He did have a broad description, essentially in the same terms that I presented an outline of the case to the Vice President himself on the same day, later in the afternoon after I had seen the President.

The fact that the investigation has touched on actions of the Vice President in his capacity as such, does not constitute a charge. There has been no charge against the Vice President except the charge embodied in the information to which he pleaded nolo yesterday. We have summarized as accurately and fairly as we can the substance of the Government's evidence in order that the American people would have this before them.

But we do not assert that this summary of the evidence is an indictment. It is designed, I've said, for purposes of disclosure and with the recognition that were the information not set forth, the consequence inevitably would have been that there would have been a persisting effort to dig it out, the process would have dragged on, and the result would have been an open ulcer on the body politic.

Q. From your experience in the Agnew case and knowing that Presidential candidates do not know everything about the man that's his running-mate, do you have any recommendations for any strengthening of the screening process in 1976 for the choosing of Vice-Presidential candidates.

A. That's, I think, a very important point, it's one to which I have given some thought, but not enough to have any clear recommendations beyond the obvious point that there clearly ought to be some mechanism that enables the man chosen as his party's standard bearer to get a more complete picture of the private history of a proposed running-mate.

Q. I have a question for Mr. Beall. Mr. Beall, the summary is not precise on one point—how much money Mr. Agnew supposedly took. What does the Justice Department claim was the total amount of graft Agnew took in this "kickback scheme?"

MR. BEALL: I think the Attorney General has already answered that question substantially, when he indicated that the Internal Revenue Service investigation in this case was not complete as of yesterday, and that it is impossible, for that reason, to accurately answer in terms of dollars and cents the amount of monies which may have been involved.

Incidentally, I think it's important to recognize from our standpoint the tremendously effective work that was done by the Internal Revenue Service and by, specifically, the Intelligence Division of the Internal Revenue Service which was the investigative arm of the United States Attorney's Office and the Department of Justice throughout this entire matter.

Thank you very much.