

# Agnew Retains Clout With Airline

By Jack Anderson

Although former Vice President Spiro Agnew has been sentenced as a criminal tax cheat, he still has enough clout to bump less celebrated passengers from their airliner seats.

He still travels with a Secret Service escort. With two bodyguards running interference, he barged ahead of other passengers waiting in line at New York City's LaGuardia airport for the 4 p.m. Eastern shuttle flight to Washington on Dec. 6.

Among the displaced passengers were two Senate aides, Charles Bangert and Gerald Hellerman, who had been working all day on the energy crisis.

After Agnew had been comfortably seated with his Secret Service protectors alongside him, there was still one empty seat. The passenger ahead of Bangert and Hellerman was offered the space. "No thanks," replied the ruffled traveler. "I wouldn't ride on the same airplane with that man."

The bumped passengers were obliged to wait 21 minutes for a second shuttle plane.

An Eastern Airlines spokesman told us that Agnew was given special treatment at the request of the Secret Service. A Secret Service spokesman said the agents had made the request "to facilitate his security." Our repeated calls to Ag-

new's office brought no response.

**Footnote:** Eastern Airlines also gave favored treatment recently to President Nixon's friend Bebe Rebozo. Columnist Maxine Cheshire reported that a passenger aboard a Miami-to-Washington airliner was persuaded to give up her first-class seat and move back into the coach compartment in order to provide Rebozo with a comfortable seat. Rebozo was also delivered to the door of the plane in a limousine, with an Eastern official carrying his bags.

**Privileged Passengers—**Ex-Vice President Agnew isn't the only bigwig, apparently, who gets special travel privileges.

While lesser Americans are scrambling for reservations during the holidays, their congressmen will get favored treatment.

On Dec. 10, Rep. John McFall (D-Calif.), the House Democratic Whip, sent a memo to his colleagues telling of "special arrangements" to assist them with their travel plans during the "adjournment period and the Christmas holidays."

Confides the memo: "Members experiencing difficulties in securing desired reservations may receive assistance by calling the congressional desks of the cooperating airlines." A listing of the priority phone

numbers of 11 major airlines is thoughtfully provided.

"Amtrak travelers," adds the McFall memo, may also "receive assistance" by calling special numbers.

McFall happens to be chairman of the Transportation Appropriations subcommittee, which controls the pursestrings for airlines and railroads. A spokesman for him conceded that "it's only because of the committee he's on that we could ask for help."

The request for congressional priority went out to both the Air Transport Association and to Amtrak. Although the memo asserts that both "indicated they will do all they can to assist members under these difficult circumstances," spokesmen for both ATA and Amtrak said the special telephone numbers will provide the congressmen a hearing but not necessarily a seat.

**Playing Politics—**The Nixon administration has been playing quiet politics with the \$2.2 billion arms shipments to Israel.

Rush orders of rockets, shells, bombs and bullets, costing close to \$1 billion, were flown to the Middle East. The remaining \$1.2 billion worth of military hardware, most of it heavy and bulky,

will be delivered by ship probably after the first of the year.

Competent sources have told us that the timing of the deliveries may depend upon the flexibility of the Israeli government in the Middle East negotiations.

The Pentagon, meanwhile, has indicated it may ask for \$3 billion to make up for the \$2.2 billion in armaments sent to Israel, contending that the replacements will be more costly than the original procurement.

This argument, however, doesn't allow for depreciation. In other words, the Pentagon is using the Middle East crisis to replace old equipment with new.

The Pentagon is also telling Congress that the airlift to Israel demonstrated that the U.S. needs more giant cargo planes. The biggest difficulty with the airlift, say our sources, was not the lack of planes but the refusal of Greece, Spain and Turkey to allow the planes to use U.S. bases in those countries.

**Footnote:** Our sources also report that the White House is making quiet appeals for Jewish support on Watergate, citing President Nixon's arms aid to Israel. Some Jewish congressmen have confirmed to us that delegations of rabbis have called on them to ease their pressure on the President over the Watergate scandals.

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