Agnew

The events of the past week will certainly go down in the history books as one of the poorer examples of the way our political system works. The first time in the history of the Republic a vice president was forced to resign from office after being convicted of a felony (tax evasion), and after evidence was released by the Justice Department which at least indicated that his criminal behavior in recent years went beyond violation of the tax laws.

Simpson T. Agnew’s resignation last Wednesday culminated two months of speculation, unconfirmed reports, and news leaks surrounding alleged kickbacks he received while serving as Baltimore County Executive and later as governor of Maryland. Originally referring to the charges as “damning,” Agnew in August said he was headed for the Federal courthouse. Under investiga-

tion, Agnew was vouched for in his denial of guilt until last week, when he finally succumbed to public and political pressures.

Certainly, it was an unfortunate event for the nation, coming at a time when public confidence in government is plunging to all-time lows, and was gone too.

However, the settlement of the Agnew case was also unfortunate because it brought to light the blatant inequities in our political and criminal justice systems.

Less than two weeks before Agnew’s resignation, Justice Department sources were quoted as saying they had Agnew “cold,” that the evidence they had accumulated through the grand jury investigation would yield a number of indictments and convictions of the former vice president, on charges of bribery, corruption, extortion and tax charges.

Then, after several plea bargaining sessions the former vice president was allowed to resign and plead guilty to a lesser charge of tax evasion, in exchange for the government dropping all other charges against him, and discontinuing its investigation. Agnew was given a suspended three-year jail sentence (unconditional probation) and was fined $10,000. He was placed under no restrictions as to his political or personal rights, as are most convicted felons who are on probation.

The question which immediately arose is whether Agnew had been “let off easy.” The answer is that he obviously was. The rationale given by Attorney General Elliot Richardson was that Agnew and his family had suffered a great deal of embarrassment and strain from the ordeal, and thus he should not be subject to imprisonment or further criminal proceedings.

The conditions of the Agnew settlement are still unclear. However, what does remain clear is that Richardson, appointed Attorney General to restore faith in the Justice Department following involvement of a number of Department personnel in the Watergate cover-up, remained a Nixon “team player” throughout the Agnew investigation, finally succumbing to political pressure from the White House to settle the case.

Richardson last week admitted the settlement was a political one, but said the plea deal was forced on him due to the tax charge “proved the criminal justice system could uncover illegal acts,” committed on what he termed “the shoddy side of government and politics.”

The public was deceived as to how the Agnew settlement was finally reached. In a White House briefing following the announcement of the Vice President’s resignation, Nixon’s press secretary Ronald Ziegler told newsmen the President had no role in the settlement of the case. However, the following day Richardson disclosed that Fred Buzhardt, counsel to the President, was the one who initiated the plea bargaining sessions which led to the settlement.

At this point it can only be assumed that Buzhardt acted on orders from the President himself, and that Richardson, despite opposition from his own camp, finally fell victim to White House pressure.

Former Vice President Agnew certainly suffered an almost un바able amount of public embarrassment through the investigation of his background. However, at no time in the history of the Nation has embarrassment been considered an acceptable substitute for justice. Nothing is.

Ford

Both houses of Congress Saturday received President Nixon’s letter formally nominating Rep. Gerald R. Ford, R-Mich., to succeed Agnew as vice president. Under terms of the 25th Amendment, Ford must be approved by a majority of both houses.

Meanwhile, Rep. Joseph Moorley, L-Mass., introduced a motion in Congress to delay acting on the Ford nomination until after the Watergate tapes issue is settled. This seems to be a most appropriate route to follow.

A Federal Court of Appeals ruled Saturday that President Nixon should be required to turn over White House tapes for examination, clearing the road for the case to be heard by the Supreme Court.

Nixon has indicated he might not comply with the High Court’s ruling if ordered to give up the case, and such a move would almost certainly result in impeachment proceedings in the House.

Ford has questionable qualifications to succeed as the nation’s chief executive in the event of Nixon’s impeachment. He has been a strongly conservative partisan throughout his 25-year congressional career, and although he may be acceptable to both Houses as a vice president, if there is a distinct chance he may become president the confirmation takes on an entirely new perspective.

The Tech urges concerned persons to lobby for delayed confirmation hearings on the Ford nomination, at least until the Watergate tapes issue is resolved. If the President does refuse to comply with a court order to turn over the tapes, Congress should exercise its authority and responsibility under the Constitution to initiate and proceed over impeachment proceedings. This may be the only path left, by which justice can be served.

Computer Science

We agree with the professor of Electrical Engineering who said that the arguments against having a separate Computer Science department are the same as those against having any departments in the university at all.

Our inclination, based on the facts at hand, would be to recommend at least a separate department; the preferable solution to current problems is that made by Professor Louis Smullin (originally made several years ago by Professor Robert Fano) of a separate school.

But there are two factors which mitigate against a solid recommendation by the Tech.

 Normally, we are capable of making an independent decision based on the facts. But according to Professor Joel Moses, of Electrical Engineering, we don’t have the facts, and have no chance of getting them.

Furthermore, Professor Fano was able to gather sufficient facts to decide, in private, that there was no real need for a separate department. The same or similar facts ought to be publicly available.

Why isn’t this an intraschool decision entirely within the province of the faculty and administration, to be made by them in refined, non-public session? No, it is not.

Electrical Engineering is justly praised as the department which most often listens to its students. Hundreds will be affected by any decision about a separate department. Hundreds more may make their decision on where to attend college based on the continuing quality of the department.

The maintenance of that quality requires some sort of change, arrived at publicly, taking student opinion into account. The Tech suggests full, public debate of the issue, as soon as possible, but definitely before the new department head is selected.