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Produced by LAWRENCE E. SPIVAK

Guest: *The Vice President of the United States*

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MEET THE PRESS

MR. NEWMAN: Our guest today on MEET THE PRESS is the Vice President of the United States, Spiro T. Agnew. We will have the first questions now from Lawrence E. Spivak, Permanent Member of the MEET THE PRESS Panel.

MR. SPIVAK: Mr. Vice President, judging by press reports, there is confusion regarding the U.S. position on the matter of a cease fire in Vietnam in connection with the North Vietnamese mourning period for Ho Chi Minh.

Can you clarify the U.S. position for us?

VICE PRESIDENT AGNEW: I can't do it this morning, Mr. Spivak, because very frankly I have been in touch with the administration foreign policy people this morning, and some new things are happening, things that make us quite hopeful.

We hope that this is a genuine initiative on the part of the North in response to the many initiatives that we have put forth in recent and past months, but I think it would be inappropriate at this time to comment on it. It is at a particularly sensitive stage, and we wouldn't want to do anything that would untrack what we hope may be a very profitable undertaking.

MR. SPIVAK: Mr. Vice President, as I am sure you know, there is a report from Saigon this morning that South Vietnam will not go along with the Viet Cong on a cease fire during the three days of mourning.

Am I to understand from what you say that the United States may not be influenced by the South Vietnamese position on this or at least not guided?

VICE PRESIDENT AGNEW: I am afraid you can't reach any conclusion like that, because I meant to convey no such impression. I merely indicate that we are doing everything we can to utilize this as a possible constructive undertaking that may result in some benefit to the progress in putting this terrible war to an end, and these details are under consultation at the present time.

MR. SPIVAK: Can you give us any hint as to what makes you optimistic that there may be a change in the direction of the war or the negotiations?

VICE PRESIDENT AGNEW: I didn't mean to convey any real optimism of the substantive type, but I did mean to indicate

that this is at least movement, an initiative, where no initiatives have been forthcoming for so long and where the pronouncements have been so gloomy. I suppose that it is natural that we would be a little bit optimistic about the fact that there is some movement taking place.

MR. SPIVAK: Mr. Vice President, may I take you to the question of troop withdrawal. There is a story in today's Washington Post by Joseph Kraft which says that despite all the Administration's talk about troop withdrawal, the total of the American troop level in Vietnam is now only 2,500 below what it was when the President took office.

Can you tell us what the situation is, on the number of troops that have already been withdrawn?

VICE PRESIDENT AGNEW: The President has indicated, as I am sure you are aware, that the three criteria which must be met in deciding when and how troops are to be withdrawn are: the Vietnamization of the war, the ability of the South to undertake its own defense; certainly the level of enemy activity; and the progress of the peace talks in Paris.

These are the things that must be weighed carefully when we consider troop withdrawals.

I believe it is significant to note that in the past 18 months troop levels in Vietnam are lower than they have ever been. 25,000 troops have been withdrawn, and when others will be able to be withdrawn will depend on those three criteria already enunciated by the President.

I hope that things will progress in a way that we can continue with our disengagement, disinvolvement of American fighting men, which is our objective. But regardless of what happens in Paris, Mr. Spivak, I think that ultimately we have to move toward the aim of being able to control our involvement through the stimulation of the ability of the South Vietnamese to undertake their own active physical defense.

MR. SPIVAK: Am I to understand that you said that the troop level now is [25,000] below what it was when the President took office—the story I quoted said that it was only 2,500 below. Is that figure incorrect?

VICE PRESIDENT AGNEW: I don't believe that is correct. I believe it is 25,000 below.

(Announcements)

MR. KENWORTHY: Mr. Vice President, Kevin Phillips, who was Attorney General Mitchell's political adviser in the campaign and is still his political adviser, has written a book called "The Emerging Republican Majority," the theme of which is that there is a conservative tide running in the country and the Republicans can catch it by putting together what he calls the Negrophobe South, the Middle West, the Mountain States and

California, and can afford to neglect or give to the Democrats the whole of the Northeast and the Negro vote.

As a principal beneficiary of the Southern strategy, would you like to comment upon Mr. Phillips' thesis?

VICE PRESIDENT AGNEW: Mr. Kenworthy, let me disabuse you of the fact that I am a beneficiary of the Southern strategy. Nothing could be really further from the truth. Those who have followed my career in county and state government know that the record I made there would not exactly be compatible with what the liberals call in a rather disparaging way "the Southern strategy."

Now, having put that aside, coming to grips with the question: The Attorney General of the United States is not one who is disposed to think politically every minute. Neither is the President. I think that regardless of whether the observations made by the author you mention are accurate or not accurate, the initiatives that the President has taken in the field of welfare, manpower training and many of the other domestic programs that are on the cooker disprove this allegation fairly substantially. How could someone seeking to court the forces of reaction propose a welfare program of the magnitude and scope that the President has just proposed? The principal beneficiaries of what has taken place in these domestic ventures are the very people whom you would seem to think from listening to the author we are seeking to write off, or at least to allow them to be alienated. So I would disagree with that conclusion.

MR. KENWORTHY: Mr. Vice President, do you think that the Republicans can take as many or more states in the South than they did last year?

VICE PRESIDENT AGNEW: I would think there is a pretty good chance that the Republicans are going to make gains on a national basis, not because they prefer any geographic segment of the country, but because the pragmatic programs that are being advanced by the President have a measure of balance and stability that hasn't been seen in the country for many years.

MR. KILPATRICK: You mentioned the new welfare program, Mr. Vice President. Under that, as I understand it, the welfare benefits would be denied to those who refuse to accept what the President calls "suitable employment." Isn't this a big rock on which this whole program might founder?

VICE PRESIDENT AGNEW: This is always a very difficult problem, defining "suitable employment," but I think whether an employment is suitable to a person or not depends upon many factors that cannot be laid out as advance criteria. You have to consider the physical condition of the individual, his training, his accessibility to the work. But I think one of the things that was going through the President's mind when he put this require-

ment down was that there have been instances where the mere geographic dislocation of the individual from the work has been an excuse for him not to work, and if it is necessary for government to provide the transportation to get him to gainful employment, let that be done.

MR. KILPATRICK: Is it your impression that a large number of the mothers involved in the Aid to Dependent Children program could take jobs but are simply not doing it?

VICE PRESIDENT AGNEW: I think a lot want to take jobs, and I think one of the most encouraging things about the new welfare program is a considerable number of day care slots has been opened up by the program. My recollection is 450,000 new places for day care children. I have always felt, and I think the President agrees, and the law provides—the proposed law provides—that if a mother of pre-school children does not desire to work, then her position should be with the children, because the contributions she can make to their stability and to their training are more important than her being gainfully employed at the moment.

MR. KILPATRICK: If the President's plan is adopted, it will be said that the Republicans were the party that doubled the number of human beings receiving federal handouts. How will you meet that criticism among these forces of reaction that you just mentioned?

VICE PRESIDENT AGNEW: I think that is a normal reaction to the program as it begins, but the true thrust of the program in its inclusion of the working poor on the welfare rolls is to reverse this terrible increase in welfare cases that has been taking place.

For example, welfare recipients have gone from five and a half million to nine million since 1960. Now that is a considerable amount of increase—I am wrong about that, the welfare benefit payouts have. This represents in welfare recipients, a doubling of the welfare rolls since 1960. We have got to get on a track that is going to rehabilitate these people by allowing them to begin to realize the benefits of employment, at the same time not being cut off of the family assistance immediately, because this is a stifling of the incentive to work that has caused this growth in welfare.

MRS. DICKERSON: Mr. Vice President, as you are aware certain civil rights leaders are somewhat dissatisfied with the Nixon Administration to date and what they have done for the black community. They feel there has been a desegregation slowdown. They charge, rightly or wrongly, that Judge Haynsworth was appointed to the Court as a sop to the South, and they are discouraged.

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was going to take actions to show them that that distrust was undeserved.

Can you point to those actions?

VICE PRESIDENT AGNEW: I think the actions that have been taken have been very encouraging. I want to particularly take this chance to commend Mr. Brown of the Equal Employment Opportunity group for what he has done. I think he has the confidence of everyone in the country.

The Philadelphia Plan I point to, a very imaginative undertaking by one of the Assistant Secretaries of Labor, Art Fletcher, in attempting to do something about the discrimination that exists in the construction industry in Philadelphia, by withholding the ability of certain people to participate in Federal contracts of a certain magnitude; and the initiatives the administration took, I think very courageously, in the State of Georgia by facing up to the fact that something had to be done there to overcome the course the state government had embarked upon.

With regard to the school desegregation cases, I believe we have been quite interested in pushing as quickly as we can into what needs to be done in the area of desegregating the schools without affecting the ability of a child to receive a quality education.

We have left it basically to the courts and the people on the local scene to decide questions of fact, rather than to HEW bureaucrats as witness the fact, as Justice Black said just the other day when he had a matter on appeal from the circuit—it was factually determined that disruption would occur if some of the need to proceed with integration of certain districts wasn't given a little more time.

So I don't think the feel of the civil rights activists of the most militant stripe is a valid conclusion, and I do think in some cases these people have a tendency to have a vested interest in the issue rather than the solution to the issue.

MRS. DICKERSON: But Mr. Vice President, even members of your own party like Republican Senator Javits of New York say that the Nixon administration's slow-down on desegregation is disastrous, as he puts it, and this is reflected by more than just the militant, professional, let us say, black leaders.

VICE PRESIDENT AGNEW: This is a point of view of one individual who, in Mr. Kenworthy's analysis of liberal and conservative that he speaks of frequently, is unquestionably branded as a very liberal individual. That is his conclusion. It is not mine.

MR. SPIVAK: Mr. Vice President, on August 24 President Nixon announced that he would defer for at least two weeks a decision on further troop withdrawals from Vietnam.

Can you tell us why that decision was deferred?

VICE PRESIDENT AGNEW: Because the level of enemy activity, I would suppose, right at that period seemed to become greater, and he indicated that this was a criterion that would affect his decisions. I think that this was immediately after that happened that the deferral was made.

MR. SPIVAK: There have been some reports from defense officials—that is, quoting defense officials—as saying there is little doubt that a sizeable withdrawal of troops would begin in the near future.

Is that certain?

VICE PRESIDENT AGNEW: We are not going to speculate at this time, particularly with regard, Mr. Spivak, to things that are happening just this morning, and my response to your earlier questions on troop withdrawals—I certainly hope that the progress, the substantive progress of reaching an amicable, decent solution to the problem in Vietnam will allow it to happen, but I can't speculate on it at this point.

MR. SPIVAK: Mr. Vice President, may I then take you to the subject of crime in Washington, D.C. During the election campaign President Nixon said, "Washington, D.C., is the one city in this country where the Federal Government is the agency responsible for law enforcement."

Now, in July of this year the reported serious crime in the District of Columbia was 30.5 percent higher than it was in July of 1968.

Can you tell us why the Administration has been so unsuccessful in stopping the rise of crime in Washington, D.C.?

VICE PRESIDENT AGNEW: I don't think the Administration has been unsuccessful. It takes a little time. It takes a little legislation.

The Attorney General has sent a very definitive package of legislation to the Congress which will assist in curing the crime problem, not only in Washington but throughout the country. Until these things are acted upon by the Congress, the active elimination of these root causes can't proceed.

We have done all we can administratively, and I think some good is shown from that, even though the tenor in the country is such that crime seems to be on the rise. But I feel, and most Justice and enforcement people throughout the country feel, that what the Attorney General has sent to the Congress will be most effective, if we can get these reforms made.

MR. KENWORTHY: Mr. Vice President, back to Vietnam again: You have tied pull-out with the President's three criteria.

Did you mean to suggest that if these three criteria are not met or one or two of them are not met then there would be no further pull-out and we would be there indefinitely?

VICE PRESIDENT AGNEW: No, I didn't suggest, Mr. Ken-

worthy that the three criteria must concur for there to be any action. I don't think they relate to each other in that context.

Obviously if the peace talks in Paris are successful, it makes no difference about the ability of the South Vietnamese to defend themselves because then that will be solved. Also, the question of enemy activity would automatically decrease.

I certainly didn't want to leave that impression. I did want to leave the impression that we are not relying totally at this point on the success of the peace talks, that we are committed to disinvolve the United States on an active participating military basis from this war, regardless of the action of the enemy, by increasing the ability of the South Vietnamese to defend themselves.

MR. KENWORTHY: But what if the Thieu government cannot really set up a viable government that has popular support and cannot defend itself?

VICE PRESIDENT AGNEW: I think it is manifestly clear that as the South Vietnamese are willing and able to continue to govern themselves, they can resist the military onslaught from the North.

MR. KILPATRICK: Mr. Vice President, since the kidnapping a few weeks ago of Ambassador C. Burke Elbrick much concern and speculation has been heard that similar incidents may follow around the world.

What is the Administration doing, or what could it do to prevent these actions?

VICE PRESIDENT AGNEW: I don't know whether there is anything that a country that puts the premium on human life and human health and well-being that this country puts on it can do to discourage international blackmail. I guess we are the most vulnerable country in the world to this because we are so sensitive to it. Human life has such a value to us that it is well-known among the bandits of the world that we will go to tremendous lengths to rescue those who represent us and have fallen into the traps that have been set for them.

Certainly we want to continue to work on a degree of international accord that will stimulate governments all over the world to take positive, affirmative and quick action against this type of thing.

MR. KILPATRICK: Are you satisfied with the course taken by the Brazilian government?

VICE PRESIDENT AGNEW: I want to say that the Brazilian government has been not only compassionate but has acted with alacrity and done everything that we can possibly think of that they could do to cooperate, and we are very, very grateful to them.

MR. KILPATRICK: Would it be worthwhile to intensify security measures at embassies?

VICE PRESIDENT AGNEW: Yes, I think that is going to have to come.

MRS. DICKERSON: Mr. Vice President, I realize the delicate nature of talking about Vietnam at this time, in history, but in answer to Mr. Spivak's question you used the phrase, "Hope for a new initiative."

I am not clear whether you are talking about an initiative on our part or on theirs?

VICE PRESIDENT AGNEW: I think we have made every possible initiative that we can make, but as far as they are concerned we have seen very little forthcoming activity. I was referring to the North Vietnamese, not to us.

MR. NEWMAN: Less than four minutes left.

MRS. DICKERSON: Let me follow that question with this thought: The Majority Leader of the Senate, Mike Mansfield, today called on us to use this opportunity to seize the initiative. Do you think this is a good time for us to do that—do you, personally?

VICE PRESIDENT AGNEW: Nothing really distresses me anymore than when I see and hear people in our government calling upon us to seize the initiative in the Vietnam situation. We have exercised every conceivable initiative that can be dreamed up and suggested by the people of our country who are interested in ending the war and even some that have been suggested from outside the country. We stopped the bombing, we have cut down our level of activity, we have attempted to reach solution through every diplomatic means possible. Every time we make one of these initiatives, it is rejected as inadequate by the enemy and nothing is forthcoming from them in response. It is like we are moving by steps and they are intransigent. Now we hope this is going to change.

MRS. DICKERSON: Mr. Vice President, let me just interrupt a second to ask you what the Administration position should be on the resolution or amendment that Republican Senator Cooper is proposing on Thailand? In other words, he says he doesn't want us to back into another war as we did in Vietnam. Would the Administration be for such an amendment?

VICE PRESIDENT AGNEW: I think the Administration is basically in favor of that.

MRS. DICKERSON: You will come out in favor of that?

VICE PRESIDENT AGNEW: Oh, yes. Secretary Laird has said on many occasions—and incidentally on this Thailand thing,

I think we have got to set the record straight. He has publicly offered these documents, which are incidentally not treaties and not commitments and are not even approved by him or by Secretary Rogers or by the President, for the scrutiny of anyone on the Foreign Relations Committee of the Senate.

MR. NEWMAN: Two minutes left.

MR. SPIVAK: Mr. Vice President, traditionally Vice Presidents have found their jobs confining, unrewarding and frustrating. How do you find the job of Vice President, and why?

VICE PRESIDENT AGNEW: Well, Mr. Spivak, I rather enjoy it. I think I have the privilege of working with the President of the United States who has recognized all these inhibiting factors of the Vice Presidency and done everything he can to make it less inhibiting. Perhaps I have been accused in some cases of being a little more outspoken than Vice Presidents usually are, but it is only because I understand that my contribution to the administration, as the President understands it, will be enhanced by my being completely candid and forthright and attempting to bring to the national government the particular expertise that I have accumulated in state and local government.

MR. SPIVAK: Mr. Vice President, there have been newspaper reports that President Nixon has given you a course in how to be President. Can you tell us whether those reports are true and give us some idea of what the training course involved?

VICE PRESIDENT AGNEW: I don't know whether that is a valid observation or definition of what he is trying to do. I think he is recognizing that the Vice President is a standby President, has attempted to put me in a position where I am completely in contact with the information that he accumulates in daily decisions, in the National Security Council, the Urban Affairs Council, the Cabinet meetings and every other formal group that meets to make policy in the government.

MR. NEWMAN: About 15 seconds left, if you want to add to that answer, Mr. Vice President.

VICE PRESIDENT AGNEW: I have little to add except that it keeps me pretty busy.

MR. SPIVAK: Are you likely to take any trips abroad in order to broaden your understanding of foreign policy?

VICE PRESIDENT AGNEW: Yes, I would expect late this year I will take a trip abroad and maybe a fairly substantial one.

MR. NEWMAN: I'm sorry to interrupt. Our time is up. Thank you, Mr. Vice President, for being with us today on MEET THE PRESS.

VICE PRESIDENT AGNEW: It has been a pleasure.

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NANCY DICKERSON, *NBC News*
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