

## Here comes the 'Aggernaut'

Spiro Agnew's great bellow of alarm last week that the Hatfield-McGovern amendment was "a blueprint for the first defeat in the history of the United States" may have shaken up those citizens who like the idea of setting a date for getting out of Vietnam. (Pollster Louis Harris finds them in the majority, 44% to 35%.) But that was only the overture. The real show begins Sept. 10 when Agnew, on behalf of GOP candidates running this fall, starts his one-man crusade across the trembling land.

Eastern Air Lines is reconfiguring a Boeing 727 so the Vice President will have his own little compartment and his 50 campaign gnomes can cogitate in the space normally filled by more than 100 commercial passengers. The plane will be called *Executive II* unless the Vice President wants to rename it something like the *Aggernaut*, which might be more descriptive.

In the fuselage there will be four electric typewriters and a Xerox machine, a White House hot line and maybe more. There will be playing cards for Agnew's gin rummy. They may post the Burning Tree Golf Club's formula for bloody marys on the galley wall because Agnew says "they are the best in the world."

Martin Anderson, the 34-year-old Ph.D. who will direct the research operation for this singular mission, has dug out his specially designed briefcases which when opened turn into thick loose-leaf files. He will have the latest on the big issues. He will carry a list of names and phone numbers of 150 academics on every campus that counts in this country, for instant consultation. And in one satchel will go *A New Dictionary of*

*Quotations*, by H. L. Mencken, that master phrasemaker who, if he were alive today, might have found much to savor in his fellow Baltimorean Agnew. But in a political enterprise as grand as Agnew's one gets help whenever one can.

Speechwriter Pat Buchanan, another of Nixon's men loaned to Agnew for this odyssey, has filled fat files with ideas for new Agnew oratory. The fertile mind of Buchanan also will be stuffed with the findings of tough contemporary social thinkers—S. I. Hayakawa, Sidney Hook, Dr. Bruno Bettelheim, Irving Kristol, Stephen J. Tonson, William A. Stanmeyer, Arnold Beichman, Daniel Boorstin, Bill Safire, the White House's resident poet, has gathered his favorite source materials: *Webster's Third*, *The Holy Bible*, *The Reader's Encyclopedia of Shakespeare*, Aristotle's *Ethics* and his *Politics*, Nixon's *U.S. Foreign Policy for the 1970s: A New Strategy for Peace* and the two-pound federal budget.

At 185 pounds, maintained by admirable restraint at the banquet table and dozens of pushups every day with his exercise wheel, the Vice President is ready. He will go out on the hustings in a bunch of Mark Sloman's (English American Tailoring Co., Baltimore) suits of mid-dleweight and modernized configuration (two vents have given way to one, three buttons to two, lapels broadened to three inches, ties widened). He will be clothed, as well, in the enthusiasm of a man who is totally infatuated with his work.

As exponent of the miseries of Middle America he is now a world figure. This development still awes him but is so gratifying that he scarcely

tries to hide his joy. He really means it when he talks about someday being a national TV commentator, the nearest thing in the commercial world to what he already is as a public servant.

Lately, Agnew has pushed aside his constitutional duties of presiding over the Senate. He has finessed some of the jobs assigned him by Nixon, such as chairing the Cabinet's education committee. He is too important a political force now to Richard Nixon to be cooped up in Washington corridors or entangled in bureaucratic labors that might taint him as a desegregationist.

The larger Agnew is a creation of his own unusual personality and the very electronics which he periodically denounces. Nixon has nurtured him, furnishing guidelines for aggressive partisanship out of his own experience as Vice President and granting Agnew even more freedom of movement and expression than he had had in his time.

The result is a political phenomenon unknown in our history. Agnew has built a constituency that goes beyond that of the President. In some instances it is far more dedicated. Agnew is even now hurtling around the world in a sort of cram course on international affairs so that he can tell his audiences he was just there.

The crusade strategy developed in the hurried meetings between Agnew and Nixon staff members goes beyond the traditional duties of raising funds, rousing the party workers, saying heroic things about the local candidates and why Nixon needs them. Agnew has become "something else," to use one White House man's words, because he has gone beyond the traditional vice presidential boundaries in both substance and language. He will continue to search out society's irritants and lambaste them. He will slug the Democrats in his roundhouse manner. He will jump into each day with his fundamentalisms. To help out, his men have a whole bagful of new ideas which they guard like Fort Knox.

In a sense Agnew will run his race against the national polls of Louis Harris and George Gallup. His magic isn't really meant to rub off on individual candidates—political history suggests that is almost impossible anyway. With the national TV crews panting after him, Agnew will attempt to elevate the whole Republican cause. That may be enough to tip the tide Nixon's way. If the scheme works, then the Administration official who suggests that the Agnew assault will have "a major impact on United States political history" may be right. If it fails, well, it will at least provide the best sport of the fall season. And there may be some side benefits. Agnew already has added "tomentose" and "struthious" to the national political lexicon. His men are toying with a new word—"spendmanship." And all Agnew has to do is read Mencken, who was known as the sage of Baltimore and thus qualifies as the kind of company the new Agnew rather fancies, and heaven knows what polysyllabic protointellectual fustian he can come up with.





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