

Old, New Agnew Seen

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"When I get up and look in the mirror in the morning, I say what are you going to be today—are you going to be the old Agnew or the new Agnew? If I feel good, I'm the new Agnew. If I feel bad, I'm the old one."—Vice President Spiro Agnew answering a question about who is the "real Agnew."

The Vice President demonstrated in the campaign of 1972 that he is a good Republican soldier, who still must convince the politicians of his party that he is suitable for high command.

Agnew today will complete seven weeks of relaxed but effective campaigning in which he visited 54 cities and performed as sort of a super-surrogate for the President. The Vice President campaigned in the close congressional districts where President Nixon wouldn't, or couldn't, and he tailored his rhetoric and his campaign approach to the needs of the incumbent President.

Speaking in more than a score of marginal House districts and in such states as Texas, Montana, Michigan, South Dakota and Kentucky, where Republican candidates for U.S. Senate face difficult contests with Democratic opponents, Agnew, in effect, launched his campaign for 1976 by assisting the 1972 campaigns of other candidates. This is precisely the way that Richard Nixon earned collectible political IOUs in two decades of partisan campaigning.

"Republican candidates in states with high Democratic registration felt they were being jettisoned by the Democrats for Nixon," said one party official. "They appreciated that Agnew, at least, extended a helping hand."

The Vice President's other effort in the campaign was to convince the press and the people that he is more "presidential" than they ever suspected in the campaigns of 1968 and 1970.

To this end he held nine press conferences in the

seven weeks of campaigning and frequently made himself available to reporters on his plane. More importantly, he modified the harsher features of his rhetoric, returning to a campaign style he said had been typical of him before his celebrated criticisms of the media and liberal members of his own party two years ago.

Agnew said frequently during the campaign that he felt more comfortable with his new, subdued rhetoric and with what the Vice President, in a burst of understatement, once referred to as the "unfrenetic" pace of his re-election efforts.

The Vice President's strategists made no visible attempts at creating crowds or making news. Until the final week of the campaign he limited his speaking appearances to one or two a day, and he seemed to delight far more in socializing with Frank Sinatra than in making speeches at political rallies.

His chief reason for returning to Southern California a week before the election was to attend an Israel bond dinner where Sinatra received the State of Israel's Medallion of Valor. Agnew praised Sinatra as "a humanitarian who avoids the spotlight and is a man of compassion in the truest sense," then left the banquet hall so he wouldn't be associated with a sales speech on behalf of Israel bonds.

While Agnew has undoubtedly earned credits with the congressional candidates for whom he has campaigned, his relaxed approach to the fall campaign evoked mixed responses from other Republican politicians.

In Minnesota, a state that never has been politically congenial to the Nixon administration, a high-placed Republican official who had been concerned about "harsh" Agnew rhetoric, said after the Vice President's visit that he was pleasantly surprised with his "constructive" approach. In Indiana, party officials were pleased that the Vice President made an effective

and timely appearance in the state's Northeast 4th district, where Republicans have high hopes of capturing a Democratic seat.

But in California, where Agnew spent three days in mid-October and made only one campaign speech, a party official described him as "a modern Henry Cabot Lodge."

Among Republican politicians who remember the 1960 campaign, Lodge is chiefly noted for a marked distaste for campaigning and for undemanding schedules that sometimes ended in mid-afternoon.

The 1960 election, however, was a close race from beginning to end. In 1972, the main concern of Nixon re-election officials was that Agnew would become the focal point of controversy, either for airplane asides such as the comments that were taken as racial slurs in the 1968 campaign or for unrelenting rhetoric that would undermine the presidential campaign theme of "running on the record."

Agnew performed so well in his role as positive spokesman—McGovern said he was masquerading as "Prince Charming"—that the story is told in administration circles of how a vice-presidential staffer objected when a caller from the re-election Committee suggested a particularly strong attack on McGovern.

That, the Agnew staff man supposedly replied, would conflict with the Vice President's role as a positive spokesman.

The drawback with the new Agnew's quiet, statistical approach was that it neither turned out nor turned on the crowds.

After John Wayne, Sinatra and a squadron of entertainment and sports celebrities were introduced at an Anaheim rally, several hundred in the crowd left without waiting for Agnew to finish his speech. At other rallies, the audiences listened dutifully but applauded only when Agnew became engaged with hecklers or made mild anti-Mc-

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tent of his speeches, which are deliberately weighted with statistics as part of an effort to demonstrate, as one Agnew aide put it, "that the Vice President had done his homework."

It is no accident that the crowd response to Agnew speeches picked up sharply in the final week of the campaign when whistle-blowing hecklers succeeded in bringing the "old Agnew," to center stage. The Vice President was repeatedly interrupted by applause during a fiery speech in Cheyenne on Thursday night which Agnew delivered off the cuff.

He wound up this effort by accusing McGovern of "pompish oafishness" and by claiming that "never, never in the history of this country has a candidate meddled around with foreign policy the way George McGovern has with the Vietnam settlement."

While Agnew, in a Sept. 28 interview with The Washington Post, expressed some resentment about being described as a "boring" speaker, his staff seems well-satisfied with the Vice President's new, low profile.

"I'm not worried that he's going to become anonymous," says one staffer who regards Agnew as the probable next President. "I do not think that he can stay out of controversy very long. He's always seeking out fresh political ground."

This aide pointed to Agnew's response to the demonstrators last week, when

he suggested that new laws may be necessary to protect the civil rights of public speakers.

Agnew himself, seems to realize that the relative absence of controversy created by his re-election candidacy has been a distinct boon to his future ambitions.

"I can get the fire when the occasion calls for it," he said recently. "And I'm not going to burn out my furnace when it isn't needed."

Agnew himself freely concedes that he has thought about 1976, although he said at a San Diego press last week that speculation about a 1976 candidacy "is a frivolous exercise in self-delusion."

Nonetheless, both the Vice President and his aides are well aware of the political credits that Agnew has earned in the race, credits they hope to cash in at the 1976 Republican convention.

One Agnew aide says that the next effort will be to build up the Vice President as "a national rather than a partisan figure." Taking a leaf from the political works of Richard Nixon, the Vice President already describes himself as "a centrist" and he is talking about a trip to the Soviet Union after the election.

"His problem is to say what he has been saying and not to sound harsh or partisan in doing it," explains an Agnew staffer.

It is this strategy that is likely to form the basis of Agnew's battleplan to win the presidency in 1976.

Govern jokes. Samples:

McGovern and his staff, said Agnew, spent Halloween night at a party "bobbing for issues." Another time, McGovern toured the Thousand Islands and promised each of them a dollar.

Part of Agnew's problem has been his dry, almost inflexionless delivery, particularly in reading a speech. Part of it is the con-