

# AGNEW CHARGES TV POWER ABUSE

Tiny, Closed Fraternity  
of Privileged Men

By BILL EBERLINE

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Vice President Spiro T. Agnew said Thursday night the television networks hold an unprecedented concentration of power over American public opinion. He suggested it may be time they are made "more responsive to the views of the nation."

"The people can register their complaints on bias through mail to the networks and phone calls to local stations," he said. "This is one case where the people must defend themselves . . . where the citizen, not the government, must be the reformer . . . where the consumer can be the most effective crusader."

"The American people would rightly not tolerate this kind of concentration of power in government. Is it not fair and relevant to question its concentration in the hands of a tiny and closed fraternity of privileged men, elected by no one, and enjoying a monopoly sanctioned and licensed by government?"

Dr. Frank Stanton, president of CBS, called the speech an "unprecedented attempt by the vice president of the United States to intimidate a news medium which depends for its existence upon government licenses."

## HELD REGRETTABLE

Julian Goodman, president of NBC, said "Vice President Agnew's attack on TV news is an appeal to prejudice. More importantly, Mr. Agnew uses the influence of his high office to criticize the way a government-licensed news medium covers the activities of government itself." He said, "It is regrettable that the vice president of the United States would deny to TV freedom of the press."

Leonard H. Goldenson, president of ABC, said his network was "fully confident in the ultimate judgment of the American public."

Mutual Radio network, how-

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ever, declared it "heartily endorsed" what it characterized as the vice president's "call for fairness, balance, responsibility and accuracy in news presentation."

A number of network affiliate stations in various parts of the country reported an immediate and strongly favorable telephone reaction to Agnew's speech.

In a speech delivered at a midwest regional Republican committee meeting, Agnew led off with a criticism of the commentators who followed President Nixon's Nov. 3 speech on Vietnam.

"When the President completed his address—an address that he spent weeks in preparing," Agnew said, "his words and policies were subjected to instant analysis and querulous criticism."

"The audience of 70 million Americans—gathered to hear the President of the United States—was inherited by a small band of network commentators and self-appointed analysts, the majority of whom expressed, in one way or another, their hostility to what he had to say."

## 'IN ADVANCE'

"It was obvious that their minds were made up in advance," Agnew said.

He went on: "Every American has a right to disagree with the President of the United States, and to express publicly that disagreement."

"But the President of the United States has a right to communicate directly with the people who elected him, and the people of this country have the right to make up their own minds and form their own opinions about a presidential address without having the President's words and thoughts characterized through the prejudices of hostile critics before they can even be digested."

"To guarantee in advance that the President's plea for national unity would be challenged," Agnew said, "one network trotted out Averell Harriman for the occasion."

"Mr. Harriman offered a broad range of gratuitous advice—challenging and contra-

dicting the policies outlined by the President of the United States," Agnew said. "Where the President had issued a call for unity, Mr. Harriman was encouraging the country not to listen to him."

Agnew recalled that Harriman served ten months as chief U.S. negotiator at the Paris peace talks, and said "Mr. Harriman seems to be under some heavy compulsion to justify his failures to anyone who will listen."

## 'REVERSE CENSORS'

Referring to the news commentators, Agnew called them "this little group of men who not only enjoy a right of instant rebuttal to every presidential address, but more importantly, wield a free hand in selecting, presenting and interpreting the great issues of our nation."

He said "A raised eyebrow, an inflection of the voice, a caustic remark dropped in the middle of a broadcast can raise doubts in a million minds about the veracity of a public official or the wisdom of a government policy."

Agnew said he was not proposing government censorship "or any other kind of censorship."

"I am asking," he said, "whether a form of censorship already exists when the new that 40 million Americans receive each night is determined by a handful of men responsible only to their corporate employers and filtered through a handful of commentators who admit their own set of biases."

In that connection he quoted NBC commentator David Brinkley as having said "objectivity is impossible to normal behavior."

"Rather, he says," Agnew went on, "we should strive for 'fairness.'"

Agnew conceded that the networks "have made important contributions to the national knowledge," having often used their power "constructively and creatively to awaken the public conscience to critical problems."

"But it was also the networks that elevated Stokely Carmichael and George Lincoln Rockwell from obscurity to national prominence," he said.

## 'NONE . . . TRUE'

Contending that "a narrow

and distorted picture of America often emerges from the televised news," Agnew said: "The American who relies upon television for his news might conclude that the majority of American students are embittered radicals, that the majority of black Americans feel no regard for their country; that violence and lawlessness are the rule, rather than the exception, on the American campus.

"None of these conclusions is true."

"How many marches and demonstrations would we have," he said, "if the marchers did not know that the ever-faithful TV cameras would be there to record their antics for the next news show."

Agnew offered no answers to the problem. He said the answers "must come from the media men."

In Washington, presidential press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler was asked whether any White House officials had received an advance look at Agnew's text.

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"No sir," he replied, reporting that he received a copy from Agnew's office simultaneous with its distribution to news media.

Asked for the President's reaction to Agnew's remarks,

Ziegler said, "We would have no reaction to expressions by members of the administration."

One broadcast newsman asked if Nixon had expressed to Agnew or others dissatisfaction with live television-radio cover-

age of his Nov. 3 address.

"I'm quite sure the President and the vice president have not discussed this," Ziegler said. He added that he did not care to go into his own private conversations with the chief executive.