

F Post
12-3-69

Mini-Row Doesn't Embarrass Agnew

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WASHINGTON (AP) — "If you got embarrassed about every mini-row you'd never say anything," says Spiro T. Agnew, "because there is a mini-row every time you say something. There always has to be disagreement—that's our system."

The vice president propounded this philosophy in an interview shortly before publicly demonstrating again his kinship with controversy by attacking supporters of the Vietnam Moratorium as well as the television medium.

It has become a favorite debate in the capital whether Agnew is saying things in the name of the administration that President Nixon would prefer left unsaid or, conversely, that he is saying for the President what Nixon dares not say himself.

Aides say it is an Agnew characteristic to express his feelings without adornment (one used the word "blurt"). They liken him to Harry S. Truman.

"He's accused of slips of the tongue," says Herb Thompson, his press secretary. "This man is very cool. He is not a stumblebum. He doesn't say things accidentally."

It may be that Agnew is spinning records that Nixon has cut, but his words come out so boldly that they seem out of tune with the President's inaugural plea to "speak quietly enough so our words can be heard." If not always quiet, Agnew's voice has been heard.

His speeches go over big in the glittering atmosphere of the \$100-a-plate dinners where heads involuntarily nod "yes" when he speaks of those urging immediate disengagement from Vietnam as "self-appointed liberal saviors of the American soul who would have America repudiate her world power."

And there is no doubt his remarks on campus dissent ("Should the establishments of this country . . . cringe and wring their hands before a small group of misfits!") gain him favor with law and order audiences.

But other Republicans, prima-

rily those from states that tend to favor liberal candidates, are saying that President Nixon should tether Agnew. Such suggestions also are leaking from within the White House, but there is no indication Nixon has done so, or intends to.

"I think that sometimes we attach too much importance to the fact that someone is complaining about actions taken by a public official," Agnew says.

At first some of his more memorable remarks were ascribed to his newness in the job, to naivete and to the difficult transition of moving from the governor's mansion in Maryland to a step from the presidency.

There had, however, been some portents of what was to come. As governor, for instance, Agnew took a firm stand against civil rights demonstrations.

Then, while campaigning, came: "If you've seen one slum, you've seen them all."

He called Baltimore Sun reporter Ken Oishi—a longtime acquaintance—a "fat Jap" and was plainly hurt when the jibe made him appear to be insensitive.

Before the Oct. 15 moratorium he said protests should be directed against Hanoi and called the upcoming demonstrations "ironic and absurd."

Then came the \$100-a-plate dinner in New Orleans. Thompson said Agnew was given a draft by his speech writer, Cynthia Rosenwald, didn't think it had enough meat and rewrote it himself.

Thus were born the since much-quoted words: "A spirit of national masochism prevails, encouraged by an effete corps of impudent snobs who charac-

terize themselves as intellectuals." The moratorium leaders, he said, were "dissidents and anarchists."

Nixon personally praised his vice president face to face at a White House reception saying, "I am very proud to have the vice president with his Greek background in our administration and he has done a fine job for our administration."

And then Nov. 13 he took on the TV networks and their commentators as "a tiny and closed fraternity of privileged men, elected by no one, and enjoying a monopoly sanctioned and licensed by government."

He said former peace negotiator Averell Harriman had made unnamed but damaging "concessions" to the North Vietnamese in Paris, that the networks "have shown themselves willing to give him all the time he desires . . . to justify his failure to any one who will listen" and that the networks were often biased in presenting news.

The networks lost no time in expressing their dissent.

After the address, presidential press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler said "the President has great confidence in his vice president and he supports his vice president in the office."

Agnew impresses acquaintances as the kind of man who doesn't mind acting on his own. "I never have had what you call a kitchen Cabinet, even when I was governor," he said when asked from whom he seeks advice.

"He just gets fired up about something, decides it's an issue to be tackled, and goes out and speaks his mind," Thompson says.

Agnew later explained that the "impudent snobs" he spoke of were not the young people but "the people who are in the leadership of some of the movements today." Indeed, he made a similar statement in the speech as delivered, but it was not in the text given to news media in advance and the qualification went largely unreported.

"I wish you fellows would print what I mean, not what I say," Agnew joked once, as Barry Goldwater did in 1964.

Asked in an interview if the administration were listening to the protests, Agnew replied: "Oh, yes. The President has made it clear that he is wholly conversant and listening to every dissent. I don't think there is a chance in the world that he is not weighing carefully what's

being said. But I have to disagree with you how prevalent this dissent is. I think it's grossly overrated. We have 200 million people in this country now. It doesn't take much of a proportion of those people to look like a very prevalent dissent."

Q. You think it's still a very small minority?

A. Very loud, but it's very small.

The vice president has encountered dissent in his own home from 13-year-old daughter Kimberly. He told a columnist that Kimberly asked permission to walk in the candlelight vigil at the White House. The columnist quoted Agnew as replying: "I wouldn't let her. She was unhappy about a day, but she got over it."

The Constitution assigns the vice president only one power—to cast tie-breaking votes in the Senate over which he presides. Traditionally, the vice president's role has been what Woodrow Wilson called "one of anomalous insignificance and curious uncertainty." Nixon, taught by eight years in the same office—at times having to take over for an ill president—pledged to make it more.