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Mansfield Says Agnew Is 'Unfair' in Remark

Associated Press

Democrats fired back yesterday at Vice President Spiro T. Agnew's charge that four of the party's presidential possibilities have engaged in "reckless and appalling" calls for defense spending cuts that resemble the views of a top U.S. Communist party official.

So did the Communist official.

Agnew made the charge Thursday night, naming Sens. Edmund S. Muskie of Maine, George McGovern of South Dakota, Hubert H. Humphrey of Minnesota and Edward M. Kennedy of Massachusetts.

He compared their calls for total U.S. withdrawal from Indochina and redirection of national priorities with a similar statement by Gus Hall, general secretary of the Communist Party USA but said "None of them, I am sure, would draw any comfort" from that.

"The vice president is correct," Senate Democratic leader Mike Mansfield told reporters. "They would not take comfort in it.

"I think it is a most unfair comparison and utterly uncalled for," Mansfield added.

Humphrey, the only one of Agnew's targets present in the Senate Friday, dismissed the vice president's charge.

"I pay no attention to it," he told a reporter.

In New York, Hall called Agnew's statements "a reactionary effort to frighten all opposition."

The Communist leader said the vice president had used a "McCarthyite logic" of making it a crime for anyone to have the same position as the Communist Party.

"With this logic," he said, "the great majority of the people commit a crime because they are against the war in Vietnam, against the Nixon wage freeze and against racism — because we Communists take the same position."

Agnew spoke at a meeting of the National Security Industrial Association, a group including defense contractors.