

# Agnew: Nixon Tries to be Fair to Media

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Vice President Spiro T. Agnew said yesterday that the Nixon administration is trying

to be fair to the media but is being unfairly criticized by advocacy journalists who are "salesmen" for a point of view.

In a speech to the April "Freedom Forum" at Harding College in Searcy, Ark., the Vice President said that fears of government control or regulation of the press are "mainly fantasies."

But Agnew said there is "unquestionably wrong and right on both sides" of the controversy between the administration and the media.

"Because it is a matter of immense importance to the American public that information flow credibly and freely to them, the government and the media must put aside their visceral reactions and engage in a productive intelligent discussion of their differences," Agnew said. "The administration is prepared to participate in such a discussion."

Agnew blamed advocacy journalism "more than any other factor" for causing "the current ill feeling between government officials and the opinion-making media."

"When government officials

defend themselves from what they consider unfair slanting of news stories, the partisan newsmen, outraged at unaccustomed criticism, too often hurls the counter-accusation of 'repression' and 'censorship,'" Agnew said. "The news media really must learn to get over being so thin-skinned — particularly when they are so intolerant of thin-skinned officials."

He defined the "opinion-making media" as the large newspapers and magazines plus the wire services and networks.

Agnew said he agreed that too many documents are classified and said the administration was moving "with all possible speed" to reduce the number. He added, however, that in cases of national security it would be better to "rely on the professional judgment of experts in the government" about whether secret material should be published than on "the conclusion of a pioneering reporter that the revelation will not injure the United States."

The Vice President termed the issue of privilege for re-

porters who will not reveal their sources "a difficult question" and said he was sympathetic to the argument that revelation of sources would inhibit investigative reporting.

But he said that people accused of wrongdoing must retain their constitutional right to face their accusers and suggested that sources should be identified once a reporter has completed his investigation and "has decided to make public his allegations of impropriety against an individual."