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Wilkins Agitates Agnew

VICE PRESIDENT Spiro T Agnew just can't get straight with the black leaders of America. He talks with them, carefully follows their every word in print, and in quiet of his office mulls the black milieu. This week he got sore at the venerated dean of black leadership, Roy Wilkins, whose remarks on his 70th birthday provoked the Vice President to ire.

"This bothers me," Mr. Agnew told me in his office, pointing to a front-page newspaper story. "Roy Wilkins allying himself with the Black Panthers who are flagrant law violators. I've known Wilkins since I was governor of Maryland. He's changing. He's giving way to the militants."

Then the Vice President read aloud what bothered him.

The Wilkins quote: "We and the Black Panthers are on the same side but we may not agree all down the line. The Panthers have no more than 1,000 to 1,500 members but they have a great deal more sympathy than that, because they complain of things the average Negro knows are true!"

WILKINS, executive director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, was also quoted as saying that most black people share the Panthers' belief that a trial is no more than "a shake of the dice" for a black man, and are convinced that police and government officials persecute the Panthers.

After reading all this, in

lament, Mr. Agnew said: "This takes me back to 1968 when I had to dress down the Negro leaders in Baltimore after they made no effort to stop the rioting we had then. They can't stand the pressure from militants who call them 'Uncle Toms' or cry about white repression. There's a steady re-trenchment by moderates like Wilkins to accommodate militants."

"Here's another story. Huey Newton (founder and supreme commander of the Black Panthers) eulogizing George Jackson (killed in what San Quentin officials said was an escape attempt), and saying that those in the revolutionary struggle

would "slit every throat that threatens our freedom."

"Look here in the middle. Jackson sentenced from one year to life 11 years ago after he pleaded guilty to armed robbery. And way down at the very bottom, one of the slain guards' widows, Vivian DeLeon, saying that every article we've picked up glorifies Jackson as a political prisoner, but nobody seems to care about the officers."

"This radical chic idea of glorifying militants is debilitating to our society. How can Roy Wilkins ally himself with this? I know it's not popular so say this, but I would suggest to black people that they reassess their leadership. It's the black community that takes the beating from crime and from the effects of black militants."

"I think it is time that the Nixon administration and the Republicans not lose sight that Roy Wilkins and 90 per cent of the black leaders are active, practicing Democrats. Leaders like Wilkins just want to widen their political base to in-

clude revolutionaries. You don't have to go far to find out what the Black Panthers advocate. They train children in violence."

young man from the San Francisco bureau interview him when he arrived there the next day. "His questions all focused on the Black Panthers, and I answered him just as Mr. Agnew says I did," Wilkins explained. "What men of Mr. Agnew's stripe don't understand is that many blacks have a feeling that the Black Panthers' charges are accurate. Blacks know what it is not to get a mortgage, to be excluded from neighborhoods, to be bombed and to suffer unfair trials. I wouldn't object to getting into a fight with Mr. Agnew, but not over a matter of a newspaper interview."

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THUS, the Vice President delivered himself and went on to other matters, like his renomination next year. Any way, he's been vexed with black leaders ever since 1968. He was known as a progressive on race matters, got 94 per cent of Maryland's black votes when he was elected governor and was lauded for pushing a sensible civil rights program. As Vice President, Mr. Agnew snipes at black leaders. In July, he compared them unfavorably with leaders of black-African nations. The mention of Mr. Agnew's name at any black gathering is sure-fire to bring boos, hisses and worse.

Roy Wilkins, 41 years a black leader, doesn't boo or hiss anyone.

It was his own co-operative and generous nature which got him into the situation that provoked Mr. Agnew. According to Wilkins, the Associated Press missed him in New York on his 70th birthday, and had a