

Smearing Is Charged By Agnew

By Lou Cannon

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MINNEAPOLIS, Minn., Sept. 19—Vice President Spiro Agnew today launched his fall campaigning by declaring that the Democrats were using "smear" and "innuendo" in an attempt to discredit President Nixon.

Agnew, who told reporters that he had changed in style but not in substance, accused Democratic Chairman Lawrence O'Brien of attempting to smear the Nixon administration with unsubstantiated charges that top Republican figures were involved in the wiretapping of Democratic headquarters at the Watergate.

He said that Democrats were attempting to create "another Watergate" with allegations that grain dealers had been improperly tipped off in advance about an 11 billion-bushel wheat deal with the Soviet Union.

"They've merely created, in their typical fashion, an innuendo of impropriety around a very complex situation," Agnew said.

Agnew also presented, in the course of a 50-minute press conference, his own view that "someone" had "set up" the five men accused of wiretapping the Watergate, perhaps to embarrass the Republican Party.

The Vice President said he had no facts to back up this theory and was simply engaging "in the same sort of wild fancy in which Mr. O'Brien has engaged."

In discussing his role in 1972, a role that many look upon as a preview of his own prospective presidential candidacy in 1976, Agnew said he had not changed any basic principle in the past three campaigns. But he pledged anew to avoid rhetoric that would be "an irritant" to Americas.

"I'm trying this year to adopt a new style, a style that will not place a misconstruc-

tion upon my intent," Agnew said.

Agnew's only speech on his first day of campaigning was to the International City Management Association, where he stressed issues of revenue-

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sharing and a bipartisan approach to municipal problems.

He received a scattering of cheers and a few boos from a traffic-blocking crowd outside the hotel where he spoke and

gently answered a heckler who said he had "never got a chance to meet a Vice President before and didn't like it."

"I hope you learn to," said Agnew with a tight smile.

Agnew avoided various opportunities to deliver any kind

of a direct attack on the Democratic ticket. Upon departure at National Airport, Agnew said he would conduct a "positive, well-planned campaign" and discounted Democratic criticisms of the Nixon-Agnew ticket.

"It's a situation where it's a third down and long yardage and they can't afford to punt, so I guess they have to get a little bit reckless," Agnew said without specifying what Democratic charges he had in mind.

But Agnew did insert into the text of his speech before 1,300 city managers remarks that some of his audience interpreted as critical of the community-action type programs espoused by Democratic vice presidential nominee Sargent Shriver in the

years Shriver headed the Office of Economic Opportunity.

Without mentioning any groups by name, Agnew said that community organizations can best be harnessed to assist the public interest if they work through elected officials.

"They sometimes work at counter purposes to the professionals, causing an alienation (and) destruction of efficient city management that I find is chronic and endemic throughout the country," Agnew said. "What happens is that plans that have been totally heard over the years are suddenly rejected because some community group or other, at times under the influence of politically ambitious people who have not really informed themselves

... stop progress in its tracks."

Later, in the news conference, Agnew said he was referring to community action and community development groups and to legal service organizations that substitute "social reform" for helping the poor.

Agnew said these groups should be funded generously but that control should be vested in elected officials, particularly in city mayors.

Shriver will address the International City Management Association Wednesday.

Agnew's efforts on this opening day of formal political campaigning were directed at underscoring a pledge he made in Miami Beach to lower

the level of his own political rhetoric. He told reporters before he left that he intended to discuss the President's record, not the Democrats', and he stuck to this promise in a speech in which he used the \$5.3-billion revenue-sharing bill recently passed by the Senate as the prime example of the "new federalism" promised by Mr. Nixon in 1969.

"With the strong bipartisan support of officials at all levels of government, and with the strong support of the public, President Nixon has translated the dream into a reality," Agnew said.

Agnew and his staff are aware that the Vice President's success—or lack of it—in presenting a new, positive image to the voters will be

looked upon as an indication of the type of political candidacy that Agnew intends to present to the country four years from now. Accordingly, Agnew has evolved a campaign plan of broad, largely bipartisan themes and a leisurely schedule which affords him many opportunities for rest en route.

Today, for instance, he gave a single speech in Minneapolis, followed by a press conference three hours later, and then flew to St. Louis for a private reception.

Traces of Agnew's old feuds with the press showed in his speech-opening jokes to the city managers, but the remarks were made without any show of acrimony.

Agnew opened his speech by

saying that he had never received an invitation to speak but had heard about the meeting because "Jack Anderson leaked it to me." And he followed that up by saying he felt safest flying American Airlines, from whom the Vice President's political campaigners have rented two airplanes for the 1972 campaign.

"I figure that's the safest airline in the world because no hijacker would want to risk having to sit through a commercial from Chet Huntley," Agnew said.

The Vice President was introduced to the gathering by Washington's Deputy Mayor Graham Watt, president of the association, who called Agnew "a common man who achieves uncommon results."