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Agnew Defends 'Punchy Language'

Vice President Agnew has defended his recent use of such terms as "masochism" and "impudent snobs" as a calculated use of "punchy language" to get his points across.

He reasons that it is better to be heard, even if misunderstood, than not to be heard at all.

In a speech on Oct. 19 at New Orleans, the Vice President denounced the Oct. 15 Vietnam Moratorium observance in these words:

"A spirit of national masochism prevails, encouraged by an effete corps of impudent snobs who characterize themselves as intellectuals."

Mr. Agnew made his remarks on semantics to Stewart Alsop, the national affairs columnist, in an interview to be published in Newsweek this week.

"If I had to do it again, I'd still deliver the speech just as I wrote it," he said.

Mr. Agnew criticized his critics by saying "They land on me for a few words out of context, but the other side can attack, and no matter what language they use, there's no criticism."

He also said that because the Administration had taken steps "which the South understands and appreciates," the political appeal of George C. Wallace had been reduced, and he argued that "Wallace can't get off the ground now." Mr. Wallace, former Governor of Alabama, ran for the Presidency on a third-party ticket in 1968.

The Vice President said: "I've just come back from the South, and I'm sure now most of the people in the South don't want George Wallace. They didn't really want George Wallace in 1968, but they felt they had no alternative.

"In 1968, they felt they had no place else to go but Wallace. But that's no longer true. Most people in the South, as elsewhere, want to be somewhere near the middle of the spectrum."

He said he wrote his own speeches.

"I never submit my speeches to anyone," he said.

Mr. Alsop quoted Mr. Agnew as saying: "I suppose if you want to get a point across, you say it in exciting language, and then bland out everything else.

"Of course, if you use punchy language you're automatically attacked for intemperance. But that risk is counterbalanced by the attention you get for what you say. If you can get your thought through to the people, it can be worth the risk."

Of the "fascination among young people with demonstrations," the Vice President said:

"I have a theory about that. There is a direct relationship between the popularity of confrontation with young people and the fact that they were brought up on television, not books.

"They're conditioned to action and emotion, not words. This is a perfectly natural thing

—every day they see action, more conditioned to action than violence, confrontation on television, and they are naturally there."