

Agnew as Listener: He's Well-Briefed

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WASHINGTON, May 23 — Vice President Agnew listens.

He may be the Nixon Administration's traveling talk show. He may be considered the converse of the man in the Teddy Roosevelt maxim (he speaks harshly and carries a No. 3 wood). He may not be widely regarded as the epitome of the quiet American.

But a major share of each Vice-Presidential day is spent in the relative cloister of the Presidential understudy. Spiro T. Agnew is, when you come right down to it, a student of Richard M. Nixon's policies, and he spends a lot of his time doing homework.

This process has not worked as well as both men had hoped it would two years ago. But they feel it has worked better than in previous administrations.

If the Vice President were un-

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Vice President Agnew's job calls for a lot of travel. Here, he listened to Mrs. William P. Rogers, wife of Secretary of State, during barbecue after dedication of Johnson Library Saturday. More about barbecue is on Page 37.

expectedly thrust into the Presidency, advisers consider it likely that he would change many of Mr. Nixon's policies. Thanks to Mr. Nixon, though, he knows what those policies are.

When the President summoned his Cabinet last Thursday to disclose an agreement with the Soviet Union on the scope of the strategic arms negotiations, Mr. Agnew had already been briefed on the diplomatic development. That was typical.

Mr. Nixon said at the outset of his Administration that he knew the tremors with which a Vice President suddenly inherits responsibility. He did himself, temporarily, during President Eisenhower's illness. He pledged to give Mr. Agnew an office in the White House and a staff integrated with his own.

Inevitably, staff frictions developed. Where Vice President Johnson had chafed under President Kennedy because he lacked power and Vice President Humphrey had become restless under President Johnson because he lacked identity, Vice President Agnew has grown uneasy under President Nixon because he lacks policy authority, which he relished as Governor of Maryland.

Office Next Door

Mr. Agnew no longer has his office in the White House, but in the Executive Office Building next door. His staff is separate and a bit jealous of the prerogatives of the White House aides, who are in turn inclined to be derisive of Mr. Agnew's staff and, in a few cases, of Mr. Agnew himself.

But there has been no diminution of Mr. Nixon's central purpose—to keep Mr. Agnew informed.

The Vice President would seem, on the surface, to have little to do but tee off on the golf course—or from the speaker's lectern. He has presided over the Senate—his only constitutionally explicit duty—fewer than half a dozen times in four months. The Council on Youth Opportunity and the National Council on Marine Resources and Engineering Development, both of which he chaired, have been abolished. He has found time to spend four weekends since January golfing in Palm Springs, Calif.; Orlando, Fla.; Augusta, Ga., and Montego Bay, Jamaica.

On the Road

The Cabinet committee on school desegregation has been taken over by George P. Shultz, director of the Office of Management and Budget. The National Aeronautics and Space Council, headed by Mr. Agnew, has fallen on hard budgetary times. And the Vice President is on the road an average of two days a week, promoting the President's Federal revenue-sharing program, which the critics consider make-work.

Even so, Mr. Agnew has at-

tended three of the last five meetings of the National Security Council, is a regular participant in Cabinet meetings, sessions with Republican Congressional leaders in Mr. Nixon's office and meetings of the Cabinet committee on economic policy and the Domestic Council.

The Vice President receives copies of the President's morning news and classified intelligence summaries. During the recent antiwar demonstrations in the capital, Mr. Agnew was briefed daily by the Justice Department. Before major foreign-policy pronouncement, he is briefed by Henry A. Kissinger, Mr. Nixon's adviser on national security affairs. Edwin L. Harper, a special assistant to the President, travels with Mr. Agnew on the trips promoting revenue sharing. Mr. Nixon's speechwriters are on call to Mr. Agnew.

Unpublicized Luncheons

Visitors to Mr. Agnew's office have been as diverse as J. Edgar Hoover; Prof. S. I. Hayakawa of San Francisco State College; Dr. Dana Farnsworth of the Commission on Marijuana and Drug Abuse; Attorney General John N. Mitchell, and H. R. Haldeman, the President's chief of staff.

The Vice President has had quiet unpublicized luncheons with George Romney, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development; Gen. Lewis W. Walt, recently retired as assistant commandant of the Marine Corps, and Dr. Edward Teller, the nuclear physicist.

Out of all this activity — one of Mr. Agnew's friends describes it as "the most glorious welfare job there is: handouts from the President" — Mr. Agnew has firmly developed his own views on policy. Rarely, however, has he allowed his divergent thoughts to emerge for public examination once the President has decided on a policy.

At one meeting of the National Security Council this year, Mr. Agnew cautioned against a euphoric treatment of Communist China's decision to admit an American table tennis team. The Vice President made the same point last month with a group of journalists, protesting that press coverage and political commentary had given China instant respectability.

A Loyal Ally

Associates insist that he is among the most loyal of the President's political allies. At the same time, they acknowledge that it is easy to foresee that some policies would be different if Mr. Agnew were President.

He is less inclined than is Mr. Nixon to experiment with détente with the Soviet Union, "deeply convinced," according to one individual who has discussed the subject with Mr. Agnew, "that the Soviet system is a power system, abso-

lutely pragmatic in pressing for advantages for itself."

Although fascinated with foreign policy, Mr. Agnew is less self-assured about it than he is in the domestic area. He relies on Mr. Kissinger's advice and is inclined to defer to the military in discussions about Vietnam.

Domestically, he would follow his instincts and be, in one associate's view, "Trumanesque — with sharply defined views and no concern whether people liked them." Another friend said Mr. Agnew would be "the first Republican Populist since Teddy Roosevelt."

In general, it is felt that he would offer considerably more financial help to states and localities than is contained in Mr. Nixon's \$5-billion general revenue-sharing plan and be more politically sensitive to the views of Governors than of Congressmen.

He would, the associates feel, seek more radical reform of the welfare system than Mr. Nixon has proposed, concentrating his efforts on providing assistance to children in the slums but expressing deeply "anti-egalitarian" views toward adults.

"He feels it's right to give everyone an equal starting point, but then it's up to you to run faster than the other fellow," one associate said.

At least one friend of the Vice President regards him as "a more orthodox Republican" than Mr. Nixon, but another believes that Mr. Agnew would have acted much more swiftly than the President to expand the economy.

No one appears to dispute that his inclination would be to dismantle large sections of the Federal bureaucracy.

Mr. Agnew is not itching to be President. He has said several times that neither the Presidency nor the Vice-Presidency pays all that well and he would like to spend his declining years in comfort.

He is said to feel that "the only way a President can operate effectively is if he doesn't

care about re-election." He is also fond of pointing out to those curious about 1972 that, so far, in his meteoric rise from president of the P.T.A. to Vice President of the United States, he has never run for re-election.

All the same, there is a defensiveness among Mr. Agnew's allies over the speculation that Mr. Nixon might replace the Vice President on the Republican ticket next year with his Democratic Secretary of the Treasury, John B. Connally Jr., a protégé of President Johnson.

"Agnew's constituency is the little Republican," said one of the Vice President's boosters. "The little guy who goes out year after year to work for the party, he's not going to buy Lyndon Johnson's baby."

On the ticket or not next year, it is perhaps an understatement this year to assert, as did one Republican who has observed Vice Presidents since Mr. Nixon had the job, that Mr. Agnew "has not been content with the traditional role. Unlike virtually all the others in the Vice-Presidency, though, he's done something about it."