

'NEW' AGNEW
DISTRESSED AT
OWN IMAGE

Examiner News Services

MIAMI BEACH -- The "new" Spiro Agnew said today he is distressed at the image he cultivated in the 1970 Congressional day campaign and said he wants to change it.

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It was a "mistake," the vice president said, for him to have described opponents of the Nixon course in Vietnam as "radicals."

Agnew said at a press conference the morning after the Republican convention renominated him for vice president that this time around he's abandoning his role as the administration's "cutting edge."

"I'd be less than honest if I didn't say I welcome a campaign on the issues," Agnew said.

Dividing Nation

He said he was "uncomfortable" during the last campaign "when it became essential that I was the cutting edge."

It was Agnew's 1970 campaign that had both Republicans and Democrats accusing him of dividing the nation.

"I don't think we need that role in this campaign," he said.

"I think there is room for diversity of opinion in the (GOP) party. If I am sounding conciliatory, it is because I am."

Rubbed Out

As for his past battles with the press, Agnew said "I have no desire to make this a campaign between myself and the media."

Newsmen asked Agnew if he would campaign against such liberal GOP candidates as Sen. Charles Percy of Illinois. It was noted that he

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"rubbed out" Republican Sen. Charles Goodell of New York during the 1970 campaign.

"I don't consider I rubbed out anyone," Agnew said. "It was a self-teraser in the case of Goodell). Sen. Percy has worked very hard for party unity. We've played tennis together. He's still hale and hearty. He's a friend of mine."

Agnew also denied that there was any rift between him and New York Gov. Nelson Rockefeller. Rockefeller, too, "is a friend of mine," Agnew said.

The vice president's comments were in line with his acceptance speech last night when he decried partisan efforts that divide the nation.

One Whit

This moderating of views could help Agnew pick up liberal GOP supporters if he makes a bid for the presidency four years from now.

Agnew insisted that he still holds many liberal views, such as open housing to combat segregation. But, he added, he has not changed his mind "one whit" about violence in the streets.

Agnew confirmed that he once said he would not take on another four years as vice president if he was not even considering the "possibility of seeking the presidency in 1976."

"But I didn't want this to be construed as a decision on my part to seek the presidency in 1976," he said. "I'm not going to make any decision about that in any definitive way. I'll keep the option and that's as far as it goes."

Texas Bid

Agnew said he would be an active campaigner this fall, concentrating on states where local GOP candidates need help. He specified Sen. John Tower's re-election bid in Texas, where Nixon is looking for a new Republi-

can victory.

On other topics, Agnew said:

• "We will have to take responsibility for it," if lesser echelon Republicans are involved in the bugging of Democratic National headquarters.

"I'm distressed about the situation," Agnew said. But he added that none of the key Nixon campaign officials were involved; nor were White House aides in "key decision-making positions."

Agnew described the Watergate bugging as grotesque and juvenile. He said the Democratic headquarters had nothing the GOP needs in 1972.

• There is no reason for a Nixon-McGovern television debate. Agnew called it a "theatrical form, fraught with danger," that would only give McGovern "exposure he cannot get on his own."