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Defend Agnew, Says Nixon

Washington

President Nixon is admonishing members of his Administration and party to speak out in defense of Vice President Spiro Agnew's performance in office.

The day after he announced his new economic policy in a nationwide telecast, the President startled some subcabinet officials

gathered at the State Department for a private briefing on the policy by grasping Agnew's arm and raising it in the air.

In public, Mr. Nixon's praise of Agnew has been more restrained. When Agnew returned in July from a month-long tour of the world the President said only, "Welcome back. You did a fine job."

But at a private meeting on August 9 with officials of the Republican National Committee, Mr. Nixon urged them to "support the Vice President. Do what you can to help the Vice President. He's got a tough job and he's doing it well. He's been attacked and maligned unfairly.

Officials who are leaking details of the two incidents

are quick to note that they do not represent a guarantee that Agnew will be the President's running mate again next year.

There is one school of thought that the White House is merely trying to reassure conservative Republicans, among whom Agnew is a current hero, that the President is not unmindful of their support.

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