

Most Callers Back Agnew

11-15-69

NYT

By LINDA CHARLTON

Switchboards at radio and television stations throughout the country were kept busy yesterday as callers responded to Vice President Agnew's suggestion that they "register their complaints" about television news coverage, with a majority of the calls supporting Mr. Agnew's criticism.

At the New York City headquarters of the three television networks, a tally of the calls received during the first 18 hours after Mr. Agnew's speech showed that about 60 per cent of the callers wished to express their agreement with the Vice President. A sampling of radio and television stations throughout the country by the wire services showed that the callers supported Mr. Agnew by more than 2 to 1.

The only network that had affiliates in other cities was the Columbia Broadcasting System, which reported receiving 8,300 calls in New York City by late yesterday afternoon. Of these, 4,700 supported Mr. Agnew, while 3,600 were either critical of his remarks or simply favorably inclined to the television networks.

9,000 To 7,000

In seven cities serviced by C.B.S.—Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Chicago, St. Louis, Boston, New York and San Francisco—the over-all total was 166,000 calls, of which 9,000 supported the Vice President and 7,000 the networks.

The National Broadcasting Company, by midafternoon, reported a total of 6,001 calls, of which 3,443 were in favor of Mr. Agnew's stand and 2,558 for the networks.

The American Broadcasting Company reported having received 6,085 calls. Of these, a spokesman said, 3,833 supported Mr. Agnew and 2,252 were "for the network, or non-Agnew".

Calls were also being received by newspapers. At the New York Times, 110 calls were received yesterday. Of these, 67 were pro-Agnew and 43 expressed sentiments such as, "His talk was a disgrace to the country."

The total number of people who watched the Vice President's speech, carried live from 7:02 P.M. to 7:34 P.M. Thursday from Des Moines, Iowa, was difficult to estimate. There are a total of 82 million television sets in the United States, but this says little about the size of the viewing audience.

At N.B.C., for example, a spokesman said that the usual audience for the scheduled 7 P.M. program — the Huntley-Brinkley Report, which was moved back a half-hour for the Agnew speech, is estimated at 20 to 25 million.

Comments reported by television stations included:

"Amen, it's about time," and from the A.B.C. affiliate in Dallas — where the tally was 231 calls in favor of the speech and two against — "I'm 100 per cent behind the Vice President and I think the news media is responsible for all our troubles."

In Oklahoma City, a switchboard operator at WKYT reported, "We got 350 calls, all praising Agnew to the sky. One said, 'Oh, Lord, you are wonderful. He said just what I've been thinking for years.' There were two [calls] against him."

Callers who opposed the speech were reported to have included such remarks as: "Who's paying for his [Mr. Agnew's] air time?" and "I don't like to hear a grown man cry." There were also reportedly a number of calls criticizing the TV stations for having carried Mr. Agnew's speech instead of the regularly scheduled program.