

President of C.B.S. Says Agnew Tries To Intimidate TV

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By FRED FERRETTI

Dr. Frank Stanton, president of the Columbia Broadcasting System, denounced Vice President Agnew yesterday for what he called an "ominous" attempt to intimidate television news-men.

He said that Mr. Agnew, who charged on Nov. 13 that broadcast journalism was biased, "does not seem to have been walking a lonely path in the direction of suppression and harassment."

Joining the Vice President, said Dr. Stanton, were Herbert G. Klein, Director of Communications for the Nixon Administration; Paul O'Neil, a member of the Subversive Activities Control Board; Mrs. O'Neil; Dean Burch, the chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, and Clark Mollenhoff, special counsel to the President.

The address by the C.B.S. president, broadcast live over the C.B.S. radio network and sent out later on videotape to the C.B.S. television network, was made at a Plaza Hotel luncheon before 750 members of the International Radio and Television Society, an organization of broadcasting executives.

"In my judgment," Dr. Stanton said, "the whole tone, the whole content, and the whole pattern of this Government intrusion into the substance and

Continued on Page 79, Column 1

Continued From Page 1, Col. 3

methods of the broadcast press, and indeed of all journalism, have the gravest implications."

"In the context of this intimidation," he said, "the self-serving disavowal interpolations of no censorship, no matter how often repeated, are meaningless."

Dr. Stanton declared, "The ominous character of the Vice President's attack derives directly from the fact that it is made upon the journalism of a medium licensed by the Government of which he is a high ranking officer."

Dr. Stanton became the first network executive of leadership stature to reply in detail to the Vice President. Mr. Agnew not only accused TV news of slanted presentations but also criticized it for what he portrayed as a devotion to controversy and for not reflecting what he called the beliefs of a majority of Americans.

'In Good Conscience'

Dr. Stanton noted that Mr. Agnew had "censured television network news for covering events and personalities that are jolting to many of us," but he said broadcast news did not "propose to leave unreported the voice of the Vice President," so that "we cannot in good conscience leave unreported any other significant voice or happening—whether or not it supports Government policy, whether or not it conforms with our own views, whether or not it disturbs the persuasions of any political party or bloc."

Mr. Agnew's criticism of television's "instant analysis" of President Nixon's Vietnam speech, Dr. Stanton said, was invalid. He said commentators had had more than two hours' advance notice and the advantage of weeks of informed speculation as to the speech's content.

"If a professional reporter could not arrive at some meaningful observations under those circumstances, we would question his competence," he said.

"Despite his complaints about how and what to report, the Vice President protested that he was not advocating censorship," Dr. Stanton said. "He found it necessary, a week later, to repeat his protest



The New York Times

Dr. Frank Stanton speaking before International Radio and Television Society at the Plaza Hotel yesterday.

three times in a single paragraph.

"It is far more shocking to me that the utterances of the second-ranking official of the United States Government require such repeated assurances that he had in mind no violation of the Constitution than it is comforting to have them at all.

"Was his suggestion that it is time that the networks were made more responsive to the views of the nation merely sloppy semantics and devoid of any notion of coercion?"

Dr. Stanton said that the broadcasting industry was not averse to criticism. But open criticism, he said, "is a far cry from sharp reminders from high official quarters that we are licensed or that if we don't examine ourselves, we in common with other media 'invite' the Government to move in."

Others on Dais

The significance of the Stanton reply was underscored by the roster of those who shared the luncheon dais with him. They included:

Elmer Lower, president of news for the American Broadcasting Company; Leonard Goldenson, president of A.B.C.; Goldenson, president of A.B.C.;

Richard Salant, president of news for C.B.S.; Norman Isaacs, president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors; Julian Goodman, president of the National Broadcasting Company; Reuven Frank, president of N.B.C. News; Frederick S. Beebe, chairman of the board of the Washington Post Company; Mrs. Dorothy Schiff, editor-in-chief and publisher of The New York Post; A Mims Thomason, president of United Press International, and West Gallagher, general manager of The Associated Press.

It is understood that Dr. Stanton was speaking for the communications media in general yesterday.

Impact Detected

In a news conference following his address, the C.B.S. president said there were indications in the industry that Mr. Agnew's criticisms have had effect, "not at the national level but on the local level." He said he wished that the response to the Vice President had been "stronger" at this level.

He has received letters and copies of editorials which tend to show, Dr. Stanton said, "that Agnew's beginning to get the effect he sought." He said one station has said it will in the future carry no analysis following major addresses, but will go back to its regular programing.

Asked what station that was, Dr. Stanton said, "I don't remember the call letters, but it's one of our affiliates."

Later yesterday Mr. Goldenson of A.B.C. and Mr. Goodman of N.B.C. issued brief statements supporting Dr. Stanton.

Javits Prods Nixon

WASHINGTON, Nov. 25 (UPI)—Senator Jacob K. Javits told the Senate today that Vice President Agnew's criticism of news media carried an "implied threat to freedom of the press."

The New York Republican said that if President Nixon stood behind Mr. Agnew's speeches, "then we are in for a grave crisis." He urged the President to make his own position clear once and for all.

New Attacks Doubted

WASHINGTON, Nov. 25 (AP) — Vice President Agnew has no desire to keep up his attacks on the news media, a spokesman said today, and very likely will let the matter drop.

Mr. Agnew is described as believing he has made his point and stimulated discussion and self-examination among the press and television. He attacked both in nationally broadcast speeches in the last two weeks.

"I don't think he wants to harp on it," said Herbert Thompson, Mr. Agnew's press secretary.