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FORTAS DECLARES AGNEW STIRS FEAR

Cites 'Inevitable' Effect of
Attack on News Media

WASHINGTON, Dec. 15 (UPI) — Former Supreme Court Justice Abe Fortas said today that Vice President Agnew had generated fears that the Government might retaliate when the press criticized United States officials.

He did not say that was the intention of Mr. Agnew's recent attacks on news media, but he said that it was the "inevitable" effect because the Government licenses television stations and newspapers' television stations.

"The owners of television properties cannot escape the gnawing and corrosive fear that official criticism of their news reporting may be reflected in the F.C.C. [Federal Communications Commission] proceedings either by encouraging competitive applications, or even in a refusal to renew their licenses," Mr. Fortas said in a speech at the National Press Club.

Mr. Fortas resigned from the high court early this year because of widespread criticism of his financial links to a family foundation controlled by Louis Wolfson, a financier who was convicted of charges of illegal stock dealings.

Bill of Rights Stressed

Mr. Fortas's prepared text to the press club was devoted to the Bill of Rights. He said, apparently alluding to Mr. Agnew: "Holders of high political office must be exceptionally careful when they assail newscasters and the press for engaging in political criticism.

"They should realize that those who hold positions at the summit of Government do not—they do not—have the same freedom to criticize that an ordinary citizen has; because their words, however well-intentioned, necessarily are intimidating in those regrettable circumstances where freedom of the press is inextricably dependent upon short-term Government licenses."