

Agnew Asks Action To Protect Party

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By Peter Braestrup
Washington Post Staff Writer

If the Watergate affair is "still dangling," Vice President Agnew said yesterday, it will hurt the GOP in next year's midterm elections.

"If we get through it, and finish it in the public consciousness," Agnew went on, "then I don't see how we're going to be hurt by it."

Indirectly, the Vice President added his voice to those urging President Nixon to take drastic action. The Watergate affair must be "totally resolved," Agnew said. "Regardless of what has to happen."

In a copyrighted interview in U.S. News and World Report published today, the Vice President objected strongly to the role of the Senate Select Committee, headed by Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr. (D-N.C.), in investigating the Watergate case.

"I just don't think that the Senate, at this point, ought to be in the Watergate investigation," he said. "After the (federal) grand jury's finished, if they (the senators) are not satisfied, I think they have a perfect right to proceed."

Noting that strict courtroom rules of evidence do not apply hearings, Agnew went on to say "there just aren't any safeguards (for the witnesses). A senator has a right to make political speeches in the course of the questioning, as we saw so often done during the McCarthy hearings."

Agnew was referring to much-publicized hearings conducted during the early 1950's to televised Senate committee

See REACT, A8, Col. 5

REACT, From A1

by Sen. Joseph McCarthy (R-Wis.) on alleged Communists in government.

However, Sen. Lowell Weicker (R-Conn.), a member of the Senate Watergate committee, said there were "no boundaries" to the committee's work. Appearing on ABC's Issues and Answers, (WMAL) he said he had no "proof" that the President or the Justice Department were now conducting a "hard-nosed" investigation.

As for the President's Watergate role, Weicker said: "I have no evidence that directly links

the President with any of the (illegal) activities we are talking about."

Weicker said his theory was this:

"The President was very deeply involved (last summer) in getting us out of Vietnam, deeply involved in our foreign policy, and I think turned to his men and said 'Okay, set up our campaign. You tell us where (I'm) supposed to be for campaign appearances, and you take care of the (1972 election) campaign. I'm going to work as the President of the United States.'"

The President, Weicker went on, placed "far too much confidence" in top White House aides, "and they abused it."

Appearing with Weicker, Sen. Charles Percy (R-Ill.) suggested that the Watergate investigation "should be taken out of the Justice Department," because of its top officials' close links to Nixon administration figures, past and present, now being investigated.

Percy said he intended to urge the Senate to pass a resolution calling on the President to appoint a special outside prosecutor of "impeccable quality," such as Harvard President Derek Bok, former dean of the Harvard law school.

"It is better that the President do this on his own rather than having Congress ask him," Percy said.

The special prosecutor idea was endorsed by the president of the American Bar Association, Robert W. Meserve of Boston, who said there was sound precedent for such a move, notably President Calvin Coolidge's action in the Teapot Dome oil scandals of the 1920s.

A similar proposal came from Sargent Shriver, the Democrats' 1972 vice presidential candidate. He argued that five former Supreme Court justices should be asked by the White House to appoint a special prosecutor with jurisdiction over "every aspect" of the Watergate affair.

And Kentucky Gov. Wendell Ford seconded the "special prosecutor" idea at the start of a Democratic governors' caucus near Huron, Ohio.

Meanwhile, Roy L. Ash, head of the Office of Management and Budget, conceded on CBS' Face the Nation (WTOP), that Watergate had delayed some economic decisions and pre-empted the time of key White House aides, notably John D. Ehrlichman, the President's chief domestic affairs adviser, and H. R. Haldeman, his chief of staff.

Ash expressed regret that he had allowed a highly-optimistic essay, ghost-written by White House staffers, to ap-

pear recently under his name in the New York Times. It contained factually incorrect statistics on inflation.

According to the Los Angeles Times, the Ash article was written at the behest of Ken W. Clawson, deputy White House director of communications as part of a concerted propaganda counter-attack against critics of administration budget policies. Commenting on the article on Face the Nation, Ash said, "Probably that's one horse that got out of the barn before I could fully saddle it. And I'll go back to writing my own again."

Earlier Ash's predecessor as OMB director, Caspar Weinberger, now Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, described the Watergate case as an "ephemeral" thing "of passing significance."

Chatting with newsmen Friday in Los Angeles, Weinberger said: "I think the President has been badly imposed upon. It's unfortunate that too much time must be diverted to investigating and answering all these charges."

But at the Governors' caucus, Ohio's John J. Gilligan, a Democrat, termed Watergate "one of the most shattering experiences the American people have gone through in 200 years."

Watergate News

Reaches Russia

Washington Post Foreign Service

MOSCOW, April 29—Readers of Pravda, the official Soviet newspaper, learned for the first time today that something called the "Watergate affair" was going on in Washington.

Pravda spelled out Watergate phonetically in Russian, but it failed to spell out any details of the scandal. A brief dispatch from Tass, the gov-

ernment news agency, reported that L. Patrick Gray III had resigned as acting director of the FBI.

Tass quoted Gray as saying he had to resign because of "serious accusations" made against him in connection with his participation in the investigation into the Watergate affair.

Until now, the Soviet press has completely ignored Watergate, apparently out of a desire not to insult President Nixon. Today, Pravda readers learned that there was a "scandal"—the word was attributed to The Washington Post—and that it involved an attempt to put a listening device in the Democratic Party's offices.

But there was no hint in Pravda's story that the White House or even the Republican Party was involved in this "affair."