

A Communication

A Letter From Mr. Agnew

On Tuesday, October 2, your staff writer, Mr. John P. MacKenzie, spread forth a cute little vignette critical of my attributing to Assistant Attorney General Petersen the quote, "We've got the evidence. We've got it cold."

Mr. MacKenzie refers to CBS News as reporting the quotation from "a source close to the negotiations" and not from Mr. Petersen. He goes on to say how the story changed a little in the retelling.

One of those organs changing it in the retelling was The Washington Post, which said on Sunday, September 23:

"According to the CBS report, Petersen, with Richardson's approval, rejected the offer, insisted that Agnew plead guilty to a charge that could possibly mean a jail sentence and said, 'We've got the evidence; we've got it cold.'"

But I do not want to single out The Post as the solitary violator. The New York Times of September 23 said:

"The network quoted Mr. Petersen as saying 'We've got the evidence. We've got it cold.'"

The Baltimore Sun of the same date said:

"The hardest report on the plea-bargaining sessions came from CBS News, which quoted Henry E. Petersen, the assistant attorney general in charge of the criminal

division, as having said: 'We've got the evidence. We've got it cold.'"

And the Washington Star-News of Saturday, September 22, said:

"Petersen was quoted as saying, 'we've got the evidence, we've got it cold.'"

The Justice Department is now making the assertion that the leak of Petersen's comment came from my attorneys. This is nothing more than a pitiful attempt at a cover-up. My attorneys are willing to sign affidavits that they did not discuss anything concerning the meeting with the news media. Mr. Graham of CBS should be decent enough to confirm that his source was not my attorneys.

Now, it doesn't make a great deal of difference who in the Justice Department dropped this little morsel in the hands of Mr. Graham. The fact remains that four newspapers of considerable circulation left the distinct impression with their readers that Mr. Petersen made this improper, unprofessional and highly prejudicial comment.

The American people are not going to be confused by Mr. MacKenzie's tricky attempt to make it look as though I was trying to create a misimpression. The point remains that the Justice Department is wrong and has not denied that wrong.

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Vice President
of the United States.

Washington.