

# Agnew Press Comments and Richardson

Following are a transcript of Vice President Agnew's broadcast news conference in Washington yesterday, as recorded by The New York Times, and the text of a statement later by Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson:

## Agnew Statement

Ladies and gentlemen, when I saw you in this room just about two weeks ago, I had no idea I'd be asking to see you again so soon.

At my last press conference, I indicated that I had no expectation of another public statement on this subject in the near future. Circumstances beyond my control, however, make it necessary for me to speak out again.

Now I know this will be a disappointment to you, but this time I will not be able to take your questions—not because I want to avoid the facts, not because I do not wish to see you fully informed—but because to do so would be to continue discussion in a public forum of what should be a secret investigation.

By such a free-wheeling discussion I would be engaging in the very same tactics that I called you here to criticize.

On Wednesday, Aug. 1, 1973, my attorney received a letter from George Beall, United States Attorney in

Maryland, advising that his office was conducting an investigation of allegations concerning possible violations by me of certain Federal criminal statutes. Properly, I made every effort to protect the traditional privacy of such an investigation.

Then on Monday, Aug. 6, 1973, I learned that some of Tuesday's newspapers would carry stories revealing that an investigation was under way and disclosing that the letter had been sent to me.

## Leaks Held Unabated

At that point I issued a statement acknowledging that I had been informed of the investigation declaring my innocence of any wrongdoing and announcing that I would make no further comment until the investigation had been completed. I had every right to expect that a similar effort to prevent publicity would be made by the Attorney General and Mr. Beall and their respective staffs in Washington and Baltimore. That, of course, was nothing more than their legal duty.

Therefore I was shocked during the course of the next 36 hours to discover that the news media were reporting numerous details concerning the investigation—detailed accusations and allegations that had to be coming from people who were actually

participating in the investigation.

I therefore called a press conference on Wednesday, Aug. 8, to set the record straight. Since then the leaks have continued unabated.

I regret to say that it has become clear that sources so frequently quoted—were indeed that—persons involved in the investigatory process.

A national news magazine account headed *Heading Toward an Indictment* published yesterday and picked up by the wire services quotes unnamed Justice Department officials. I can only assume from this account that some Justice Department officials have decided to indict me in the press whether or not the evidence supports their position.

This is a clear and outrageous effort to influence the outcome of possible grand jury deliberations and so notwithstanding my initial decision not to comment I've had to respond publicly to the continuing charges.

Any person who's been in politics and government for many years is aware of the personal and political hazards of unsubstantiated charges, rumors, innuendo and speculation. I've been subjected to these before, and I'm accustomed to fighting this kind of battle.

What I find intolerable, however, is the impact which this smear publicity may have on the rights of others, particularly private citizens who have been swept into this highly publicized investigation.

## Denial by Richardson

On Sunday the Attorney General made a nationally televised denial that any of the leaks came from his department. Mr. Richardson also indicated at that time that he would investigate any suggestion that his department has been the source of such leaks.

I have communicated with the Attorney General today and have asked that he fulfill that promise and pursue such an investigation vigorously. I hope that the national news media will also urge Mr. Richardson and the Justice Department to conduct such an investigation diligently wherever it may lead and to use all available investigatory tools to compel sworn testimony to reveal the identity of unnamed Justice Department officials and sources close to the investigation.

Now I've not called you to this meeting for the purpose of criticizing the news media. I cannot fault you for publishing information given to you by informants within the Department of Justice.

The blame must rest with those who gave this information to the press and who do so with an obvious motive of interfering with the independent investigatory processes of the grand jury.

## Reply

### Fight on Innocence Vowed

I've called this meeting to advise you of the request that I made to the Attorney General and to say again to the American people that I will fight, I will fight to prove my innocence, and that I intend to remain in the high office to which I have been twice elected.

As I said before, I have nothing to hide. I made all requested records available to the prosecutors, and I've offered to meet with them and answer any questions that they may have.

Now, according to this morning's paper, Mr. Beall said that he's not sure whether he even wishes to question me. I suppose that

if he only wants to hear one side of the story that's up to him. I will say only that it seems to me a very strange way to run an investigation.

Mr. Beall is quoted as saying that I have sought a meeting because it would be desirable from my standpoint.

His statement is not wholly accurate.

It's true that I'd like to meet with Mr. Beall and his staff. I would like them to hear the truth, but before I made my suggestion to Mr. Beall, my lawyers had already been notified by the Department of Justice that the way is open for the Vice President to talk to the prosecutors if he wishes.

I do wish—I hope that way remains open. It is through proper investigation of all the facts that the truth will emerge—not through trial by headline nor by hearing only one part of the story. I'm confident that the orderly processes of justice will result in my complete vindication.

Again I'm sorry that circumstances prohibit my making myself available for questions, and I understand

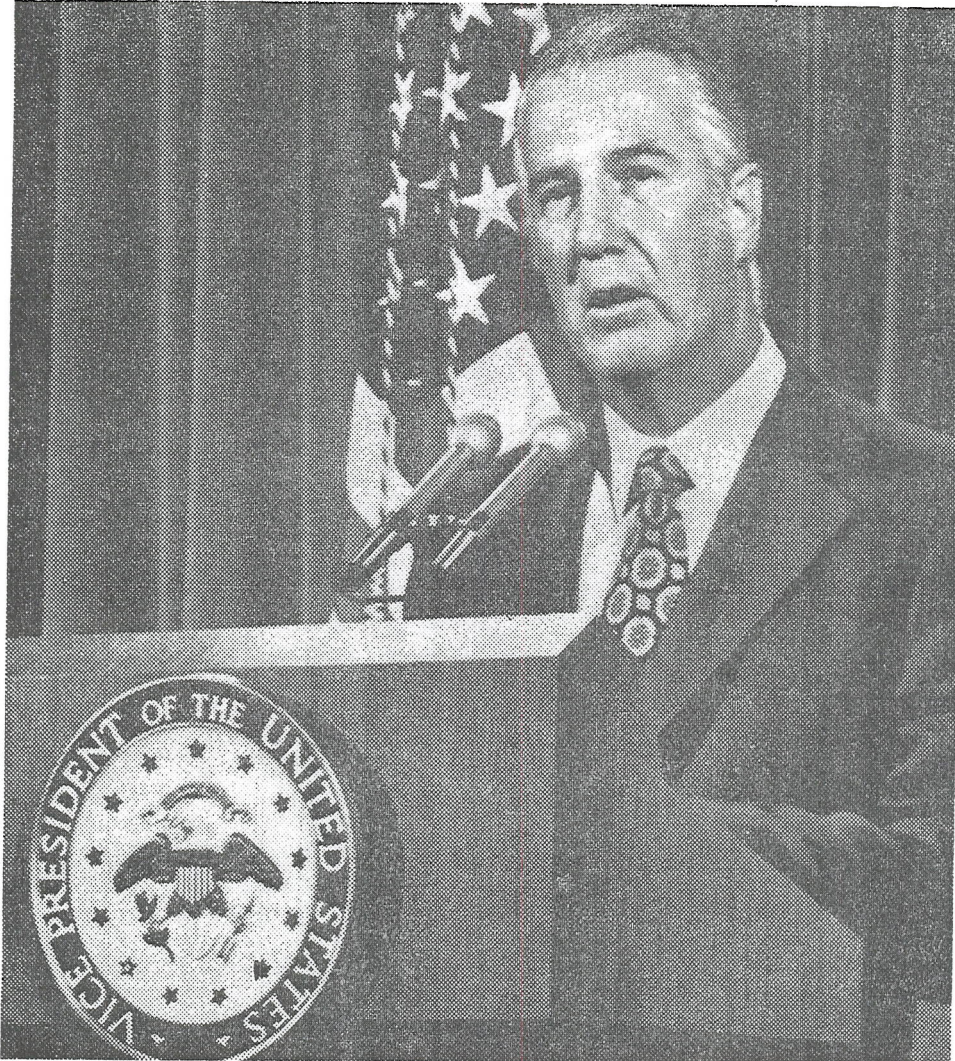
that disappointment is likely to result, but I would ask each of you as a fair-minded individual to place himself in my position and understand the restrictions of my current stance. Thank you.

#### **Richardson Statement**

I fully share the Vice President's concern about unfair and inaccurate publicity. I stand by my previous statements that every reasonable step is being taken to assure that the Justice Department has not been and will not be the source of such publicity.

By observing restraint in what they report, the media themselves can help to assure fairness. I would like to point out, moreover, that we do not now have any firm basis for the assumption that the information which has appeared in the press has come from law-enforcement officials.

In any case, any plausible lead implicating the Department of Justice will be pursued vigorously and appropriate disciplinary action will be taken against any department employe found to be responsible.

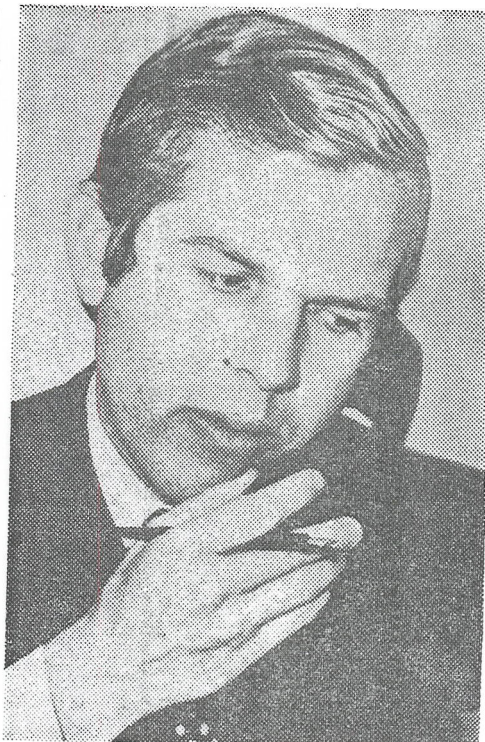


Associated Press

Vice President Agnew speaking during his news conference yesterday in Washington



Elliot L. Richardson, the United States Attorney General.



Associated Press

George Beall, the United States Attorney in Baltimore.