

Finch Slap At Agnew Stirs Fuss

Examiner News Services

WASHINGTON — Robert Finch, the secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, yesterday was quoted as linking Vice President Agnew's "rhetoric" with the climate in which four students at Kent State University were killed.

Later Finch was reported to have vowed to resign if President Nixon does not remove all U.S. troops from Cambodia by the end of June.

Finch was quoted as making the remark about Agnew's rhetoric to about 40 students gathered on a lawn across the street from the Department of Health, Education and Welfare's headquarters.

Chole Series

A student asked him what led to the deaths at Kent State.

"It was a whole series of causative things," Finch replied, "including some of the Agnew rhetoric."

"Did the Agnew rhetoric contribute to the deaths?" a student asked.

"It contributed to heating up the climate in which the Kent State students were killed," Finch replied.

After news accounts of the remarks appeared, Finch issued a statement saying that "neither by direct statement or by allusion have I ever indicated that any statement by the Vice President contributed to the tragedy at Kent State."

—Turn to Page 12, Col. 6

Agnew and Kent

SF Sunday Examiner &
Chronicle 10 May 70

Finch and Quote Disagree

—From Page 1

Finch's department also issued a one-line statement which said: "The secretary's statement on the subject of rhetoric was that everyone must be very careful in their public utterances."

But the Associated Press reporter who heard Finch's remark from a distance of five feet or less said he quoted the secretary correctly.

It was the second time this week that a Cabinet member has spoken critically about Agnew's statements on youthful dissenters.

Interior Secretary Walter J. Hickel said in a letter to Nixon that the vice president's "continued attack on the youth — not in their attitudes so much as their motives — can serve little purpose other than further to cement those attitudes to a solidity impossible to penetrate with reason."

Finch spent much of the day meeting with groups of anti-war protesters.

A student came away from one such meeting saying the secretary indicated he would have to step down if Nixon did not meet his timetable.

In a recorded interview after the meetings with students, Finch did not respond directly to the question of whether he might resign if the withdrawal did not come about.

He said his discussions with the students "dealt with the importance of the very conditions the President has laid down" for getting out of Cambodia.

He then added:

"Obviously, I believe that he (the President) believes in his course of action, that he's going to abide by these constraints with respect to penetration, with respect to having completed the Cambodian exercise, and it would be a very serious case of credibility if those conditions were not met."

Reporters sought to pursue the resignation question. One started to ask: "You mean if we were not out of Cambodia by June . . ."

Finch interrupted.

"Yeah. Sure," he said.

The discussion turned to other matters at that point and reporters never had an opportunity to return to the question.

Asked if he expected the general level of rhetoric in the Administration to be toned down as a result of recent events, Finch said, "I wouldn't want to speculate. I hope there is a lot of discussion and post-briefing within the Administration with regard to what we've learned in the whole exercise. I think that kind of rhetoric might be pretty helpful."

He said the young people seemed to appreciate the chance to talk with Administration officials because "a lot of them who came here weren't sure who they would be able to see. I think that as an Administration we have tried to get them together with decision-making people."

"I think the fact that most Congressmen and Senators have gone out of their way to visit with them as best they could has pleased them very much and has made them feel that this (kind of communication) can be improved upon."

As for the long run, Finch said the results may be positive or negative "depending on how the people involved react."