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Ad Men Polish Nixon's TV Image

WASHINGTON—Vice President Spiro Agnew's outcry against "managed news" was, itself, a deliberate attempt to manage the news. Not only did his attack upon the TV networks originate inside the White House, but TV coverage has been the subject of frequent White House strategy sessions.

Never has there been a more TV-conscious president than Richard Nixon. He submits to elaborate make-up, reviews the camera angles and rehearses his TV appearances extensively.

He has also urged party leaders to take advantage of every opportunity to use television to promote his policies.

He has suggested that cabinet officers draw up summaries of their accomplishments, so they will be ready with quick answers for TV interviews.



White House aides, skilled in TV merchandising, have been put at the disposal of party leaders. At a White House policy powwow on Sept. 30, for example, President Nixon instructed GOP leaders: "When Republicans go on television, notify Lyn Nofziger at the White House."

The President explained that aide Nofziger was prepared to supply them with plenty of TV ammunition. Urged Nixon: "Zero in on the big issues. Talk it up!"

At another closed-door meeting on Oct. 14, presidential aide Harry Dent called upon party leaders for wide "dissemination" of a presidential message.

"We're going to do this on all major messages," explained the President.

His communications czar, Herb Klein, noted that there would be "calls to editorialists also."

"Departmental people are alerted to roll their programs along," added Bryce Harlow, the chief White House lobbyist.

ON REPEATED OCCASIONS, the President has pointed to GOP strategists that he can give his policies an extra push by appearing on national television. He has complete access to the TV networks and can present his views to the American people uninterrupted by commercials.

His Vietnam speech, for example, was broadcast by all three major networks. Excerpts were also carried on several newscasts. Although he may not have liked the TV commentaries, the President could hardly argue that the networks didn't give his speech full and fair exposure.

Yet the morning after the speech, the President grumped to aides about the TV commentaries. This led to further discussions inside the White House. Out of these discussions came the Agnew speech, which was intended to bring pressure upon the networks to restrain criticism.

The first draft was written by Patrick Buchanan, who also writes the President's daily "News Summaries." (Nixon is not an avid newspaper reader, relies upon Buchanan's condensations for most of his news.)

From the beginning of the 1968 presidential campaign, Nixon's advisers urged him to concentrate more on the Nixon image than the Nixon essence. Joe McGinniss' book, "The Selling of the President 1968," makes devastating disclosures which show how candidate Nixon was packaged and presented to the American public like an enzyme detergent.

One of Nixon's television producers, Roger Ailes — who today is on the public payroll as a presidential television advisor — was quoted as saying:

"Now you put him (Nixon) on television, you've got a problem right away. He's a funny-looking guy. He looks like somebody hung him in a closet overnight, and he jumps out in the morning with his suit all bunched up and starts running around saying, 'I want to be President.' I mean this is how he strikes some people. That's why these (television) shows are important. To make them forget all that."

THE SAME ATMOSPHERE still lingers in the

White House today. Two of the President's most trusted advisers — H. R. Haldeman and Ronald Ziegler — are former advertising men. Several lesser aides also came to the White House out of advertising agencies.

A visit to their staff sessions would lead the uninitiated to wonder whether they were discussing national issues or breakfast cereals. National policy is described in

advertising lingo: "Inputs" and "outputs," "programs" and "processes." Press briefings are now "press opportunities." Things aren't simply done; they are "implemented." And hours and minutes have become "time frames."

Out of all this has developed a sleek new effort to manage the news.

NOTE: For his second attack on the media, Agnew relied chiefly upon his favorite speech writer, Baltimore housewife Cynthia Rosenthal. He chose the Alabama Cham-

ber of Commerce as the forum for the attack. Mrs. Rosenthal thumbed through her book of "Bartlett's Familiar Quotations" for a rousing quotation suitable for the occasion.

She found one from the writings of William Lloyd Garrison: "I am in earnest. I will not equivocate. I will not excuse. I will not retreat a single inch. And I will be heard."

Neither the vice president nor his Alabama audience, apparently, realized that he was quoting one of the most eloquent abolitionists and Negro champions of the 19th Century.