

Agnew's Political Role

*He Seeks Votes for a G.O.P. Senate
But Also Looks to Campaign of 1972*

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 18—The scenario for Vice President Agnew's appearance at a Republican rally in Albuquerque, N. M., the other night called for him to "enter stage left" and "exit stage right."

The notations on his schedule might have been a summary of his political career. The Spiro T. Agnew who was elected Governor of Maryland on liberals' votes four years ago appeared to have become the voice of conservative middle-class Americans as he campaigned this week for the election of a Republican Congress.

"We're with you, Spiro!" shouted a woman in Saginaw, Mich. "Heed the right wing! God bless you!"

If the White House sought to capitalize on Mr. Agnew's popularity among such individuals in the 1970 campaign, it also became clear, as the Vice President sped through six Western and Middle Western states, that his role was keyed at least as much to the campaign in 1972.

New Majority Sought

Mr. Agnew's opening broadside at "radical liberals" among Senate Democrats could have been no more than a partisan election gambit, and his appeal to blue-collar Democrats to prove their patriotism by voting Republican, merely a method to carry it off.

When the Vice President suddenly added a warning to fellow Republicans that they, too, should be defeated if they sought or accepted aid from "radical elements," his campaign took on an added dimension—part of a White House attempt to construct a new majority by welding together Republican journeymen and hard-hat Democrats.

The warning to voters to be wary of too-liberal Republicans, first enunciated by Mr. Agnew in a San Diego speech, seemed out of tune with his announced goal of electing a Republican Senate majority on Nov. 3. The only Republican candidate who could be identified as one of the "radic-lib," was Senator Charles E. Goodell, across the continent in New York.

It made sense politically if taken both as a message to

Among the political advisers accompanying the Vice President, the phrase "scammon and Wattenberg" is very much in use. It refers to Richard M. Scammon and Ben J. Wattenberg, whose new book, "The Real Majority," makes a powerful case for moderation as the only safe political stance in the near future.

For his part, Mr. Agnew was coming on as the author of a morality play in which the Nixon Administration played the heroes and those who disagreed with its policies, the villains.

Assails 'Radic-Libs'

He sought to identify the White House with "the backbone of America—the workingman, earning between \$5,000 and \$15,000 a year, supporting his family with no handouts from Uncle Sam"; with the churchgoing, family-oriented, flag-respecting citizen who "will trade a helmet for a hard hat any day" and who "does not enjoy being called a bigot for wanting his children to go to a public school in their own neighborhood."

The "radic-lib," though, he depicted as a "little band of men" who were "guided by a policy of calculated weakness" and, though sincere in their beliefs, "vote to weaken our defenses; they vote to weaken our moral fiber; they vote to weaken the forces of law."

It was not new to American politics to try to capture the middle ground. What seemed different about Mr. Agnew's effort to help assemble a philosophic majority was the vehemence with which he accused the opposition of being in "flight to the center" and his industriousness in denying them that option.

Potential Rivals in 1972

The Vice President's stress on patriotism had faint undertones of George C. Wallace's "stand up for America." And his refusal to name "radic-lib" (because, as he told inquiring reporters, "I want to keep your interest alive") struck some people as a refinement of the late Senator Joseph R. McCarthy's techniques in the nineteen-fifties — even though Mr. Agnew consistently said his targets were misguided rather than unpatriotic.