

Agnew Hopes to End Role As an Angry Campaigner

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By JAMES T. WOOTEN AUG 25 1972
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MIAMI BEACH, Aug. 24— Vice President Agnew drew the outlines of the Republican campaign here today, sketching for himself the stance of an issue-oriented platform advocate but reserving the right to resume his role as the party's oratorical aggressor.

In a wide-ranging, good-natured news conference, the Vice President also eliminated the possibility of a debate between the 1972 national candidates, defended American bombing of North Vietnam and conceded that a "Democrats for Nixon" effort could jeopardize the chances of Republicans seeking state and local offices.

The Vice President said he wanted to erase the image he received as an angry candidate in 1968 and an aggressively irate campaigner in 1970.

He said that he had not really enjoyed being "the cutting edge" for the party in the 1970 elections but had accepted the assignment because of his commitment to being a "team player" and "the President's man."

Asked whether a "cutting edge" might not be necessary for the Republicans in their 1972 pursuit, Mr. Agnew replied that he felt the role to be superfluous this year since "the other candidate has seized the razor from the wrong end."

His remarks came less than 12 hours after his renomination as his party's Vice-Presidential candidate on a day when the Republican National Committee perfunctorily re-elected as its chairman Senator Robert Dole of Kansas, who reappointed Mrs. Anne Armstrong and Thomas Evans as co-chairmen.

In a closed session at the Fontainebleau Hotel, the committee also elected eight vice chairmen—a man and a woman from each of the country's four geographical regions.

At the closed breakfast meeting of the committee, the Vice President's first appointment of the day, he told the tired but beaming members that complacency about the campaign could be destructive and ultimately place the party and its nominees in "grave danger."

Nevertheless, the tone of his

Continued on Page 38, Column 1

Continued From Page 1, Col. 7

ter meeting with reporters as essentially one of subdued confidence that he and the President would be returned to office in November. There was also a noticeable absence of acidity in Mr. Agnew's responses to questions that ranged from his possible Presidential candidacy in 1976 to the attempted electronic bugging of the Democratic national headquarters in June.

"If I seem conciliatory, I am," he said, after discussing what convention delegates and journalists have come to call "the new Agnew." He said he wanted to erase the image that he received as an angry candidate in 1968 and an aggressively irate campaigner in 1970.

"I'd be less than honest if I didn't say that I welcome the chance to be able to campaign totally on the issues," he said. "I will attempt, learning as I go, what are sensitive, key phrases that produce a reaction that is different from the one intended, to avoid avoid those things."

His remarks contrasted sharply with the theme of his earlier campaigning, as he said in Harrisburg, Pa., on Oct. 30, 1969. "If in questioning, we sturb a few people, I say it time for them to be disturbed," he said then and added, "If, in challenging, we polarize the American people, I say it is time for a positive polarization."

'The Cutting Edge'

Today, however, he said that he had not really enjoyed being "the cutting edge" for the party, but accepted the assignment because of his commitment to being a "teampayer" and "the President's man."

Asked whether a "cutting edge" might not be necessary for the Republicans in their 1972 pursuit, Mr. Agnew said that he felt the role to be superfluous this year since "the other candidate has seized the razor from the wrong end."

As has been expected for some time, the Vice President

suggested that he, rather than the President, be the primary public spokesman for the re-election effort, at least for several more weeks.

He said that in addition to his aim of confining the campaign to the issues, he also intended to pitch his efforts to a broader segment of the public than in the past, larger gatherings more accessible to the people than the scores of fund-raising banquets at which he has spoken over the last three years.

But Mr. Agnew stressed that, regardless of a change in the tone of his rhetoric, his views on the issues remained substantially the same.

An issue-oriented campaign, he said, will be to the Republicans' advantage because of what he called "wide differences" between President Nixon and the Democratic nominee, Senator George McGovern of South Dakota.

In his discourse on his new, more modulated role, the Vice President said that he now believes that his use of the term "radic-lib" with reference to candidates against whom he campaigned two years ago was a mistake because it was misinterpreted by the press and the public.

Origin of 'Radic-Lib'

He used the word first at Springfield, Ill., in September, 1970, at the outset of his attempts to aid state and local candidates endorsed by the White House. Later it became his favorite epithet for such Democrats as Senator Edward M. Kennedy and Senator McGovern, former Senator Albert Gore of Tennessee and Representative Robert F. Drinan of Massachusetts, as well as for the liberal Republican, former Senator Charles E. Goodell of New York.

"Now 'radic-libs' may be a perjorative phrase in the political sense," Mr. Agnew conceded today, "but it certainly isn't in a personal sense. There are many people who refer to themselves as liberals and many people who refer to

themselves as radicals. It's simply a definition of a personal position. It's not in the same class as attempting to identify an incumbent President with the Hitler philosophy by by-gone days."

Apparently he was referring to recent remarks by Senator McGovern in which it was suggested that the White House was involved in the attempted electronic eavesdropping at the Democratic national headquarters and that such tactics were reminiscent of Nazi Germany.

On the subject of the so-called "watergate caper," the Vice President joked, "What is there in the Democratic headquarters that's so vitally important to the Republican party this year?"

Distressed About Raid

Nevertheless, Mr. Agnew said he had been distressed about the affair, but he added that he was confident that "none of the principals in the Committee to Re-elect the President (and) certainly no one at the White House in any decision-making authority has been involved.

"I deplore it," he continued. "It is not what I want to see happen in our country. If there's responsibility to be assigned to lesser echelons of the Republican effort because of this, we have to take that responsibility."

The Vice President's meeting with the press was set in LaRonde, a circular nightclub in the Fontainebleau Hotel. His relationship with the media, often strained on both sides, seemed substantially less so today as he described improvements in network television news productions and major, national publications.

"I have no desire to make this campaign an issue between the media and me," he said. "I'm going to carry this campaign to the other candidate and his policy and not to the media."

To those who suggested that perhaps his more conciliatory tone, both toward the media

and a collection of former targets, might be an expression of his 1976 Presidential candidacy, Mr. Agnew said that was not the case.

He said he wanted to "turn off" the speculation that he has begun what would amount to a four-year campaign for the White House.

"I'm interested in 1972, and I'm disturbed about a certain amount of complacency that's stimulated by conversations regarding 1976," he said.

The Vice President, who was dressed in a blue suit, striped tie, and white shoes, returned after the news conference to a private residence in Miami, where he played tennis with friends. Tomorrow, he is to address the convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars in Minneapolis before flying to California to join President Nixon at the Western White House in San Clemente.

Schridder