

AGNEW CRITICIZED BY SPEECH GROUP

Stand on TV Commentaries
Said to Curb Dissent

By PETER KIHSS

Vice President Agnew's criticism of quick television commentaries was deplored yesterday by the legislative assembly of the Speech Association of America as potentially inducing "a chilling effect on dissent."

The action was coupled with an offer by the 7,200-member association, largely composed of college-level educators in speech and other communications, to help the Nixon Administration "to work for the expansion, not the contraction, of opportunities for creative dissent."

The offer was made public yesterday during the 55th annual meeting of the association, which is being held at the Statler Hilton Hotel. The meeting will continue through tomorrow.

'Blandness' Is Decried

The assembly said that Mr. Agnew had suggested it was "somehow inappropriate" to make immediate television comment after President Nixon's Nov. 3 speech on Vietnam. The resolution asserted "the electronic media are dangerously prone to the tendency toward blandness and conformity induced by their vulnerability to Government regulation and business control."

During the day, William Work, executive secretary of the association, told a general session that professional and scholarly organizations had "avoided engagement with social, political and moral issues in the past," but were seeking this now.

While calling his own association "a bit right of center," he said it had set up a "permanent committee on social relevance," which has since distributed "a manifesto on S.A.A. institutional racism" and started a newsletter.

A "black caucus" has begun, he said. Creation of a national associate secretary for Afro-American affairs has been authorized by the administrative council.

Opponents of "politicalization," Mr. Work said, fear that activists may force others to "subscribe to their credo or resign," and may hamper "unfettered search for truth." Proponents, he went on, contend "scholarly detachment" has become a luxury, and institutions failing to help solve problems "may cease to exist."

Generation Gap Mirrored

"The polarization of the academic community vis-a-vis social engagement," Mr. Work said, "to a degree mirrors the so-called generation gap. Many among the younger generation of scholars reject the traditional compartmentalized, disengaged, rigorously rational modes of inquiry."

"Those of us who are already on the far side of the generation gap," he suggested, "must be prepared to step aside gracefully. Obsolescence no longer creeps, it gallops."

At the same session, Sir Egerton Richardson, Jamaican Ambassador to the United States, urged more involvement of people to improve the United Nations. He said the world organization had "not maintained international peace," had its self-determination efforts "blotted by the scandal of Southwest Africa," had "not managed to promote understanding" with Communist China and had been "unable to remove inequities in world trade."