

Hearst Task Force Report [full page]

Agnew's Views on War, Tax Reform, Prices**By William Theis**

Chief, Examiner Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Vice President Spiro T. Agnew does not expect the North Vietnamese to make any peace move until they feel there is "no chance possibly" of Sen. George McGovern unseating President Nixon.

And he thinks that will depend on the presidential opinion poll standings in mid-October.

Neither does he look for the President to unveil his long-studied tax reform proposals before the Nov. 7 election or to make public any decision on the future of wage-price controls during the political campaign.

Agnew thinks Nixon's handling of the Vietnam War is "our issue" — one that accounts for much of the President's strength and wide lead over McGovern.

And the vice president believes the economy — except for the "potentially dangerous" matter of food prices — is not as great an issue as in the 1970 congressional campaign.

These were some of the views Agnew expressed in an hour-long interview in his suite at New York's Park Lane Hotel with an editorial task force headed by William Randolph Hearst Jr., Editor-in-Chief of The Hearst Newspapers. Also participating were J. Kingsbury Smith, Vice President and Chief European Correspondent of The Hearst Newspapers; National Editor Robert E. Thompson, Washington Bureau Chief William Theis and Columnist Marianne Means of King Features Syndicate.

Will Wait to See Polls

Asked if, in view of McGovern's promise to pull U.S. forces out of Vietnam within 90 days of his inauguration, he believed Hanoi would make any settlement before the election, Agnew replied:

"I don't think they will settle anything until they reach a point that they feel that there is no chance possibly of George McGovern becoming President, and that will depend I suppose on what kind of point separation in the polls is maintained maybe around the 15th of October."

Even though he expects no "formidable movement" by the North Vietnamese, he emphasized they are "totally unpredictable" and have been misjudged in the past.

Highlights of the interview:

Q—Mr. Vice President, how do you see the campaign shaping up? It's early, but you said recently you didn't expect to be the cutting edge as you were in 1970 and 1968. What is your role going to be now?

A—Well, I think I will be the exponent of presidential policy as it is developed, attempt to point out the clear choice voters have between the two candidates.

It is true the differences are very clear between the positions of the candidates, so we are not forced to dramatize what our position is and how it varies from the probable result of theirs.

Q—Senator McGovern is running pretty far behind, and his strategy seems to be to try to smoke out the president and the vice president. Do you think that will work, or is that good strategy for you too?

A—Well, we have never tried to retreat on any issues. We have tried to answer questions. Our availability to all questioning is best demonstrated by my presence here and my early campaign schedule.

Q—Sen. McGovern seems to be hitting hard on the Watergate bugging and campaign fund questions. Do you think this can be built into a major issue?

A—It's been played with such obvious political dexterity that the American people can see through it. The average person is aware of the fact, for example with regard to the Watergate Case, that traditionally if there is a civil liability that comes out of criminal actions, the civil suit is deferred until the safeguards afforded accused through grand jury proceedings and trials have been completed.

This business of moving concurrently into a civil fishing expedition via many depositions that are purely and obviously political in nature at the same time the criminal cases are going forward and being prosecuted, is very unconventional, very expedient.

That is why the people resent it. They recognize it's a political situation entirely.

Reasons Are Obvious

With regard to campaign contributions, we must remember Senator McGovern's party was in control of the Congress that passed the laws we have adhered to. There is no legal requirement under the law for us to disclose earlier contributions, and the reason for not disclosing them is obvious: Where we have such mass defections from traditional supporters of the other party that have been brought about by the unpalatable McGovern positions, these people don't want to be identified in such a way that their action in deserting their traditional base can be used against them in some future year.

Moreover, this attempt on the part of the McGovernites to perpetrate the fiction the Nixon administration is supported by the wealthy and the big contributor while they are supported by the little man, is transparently false.

Couple that with private loans coming from young millionaires, many of whom are in their twenties and have inherited great wealth, some of whom have made it, makes the McGovern attempt to wrap himself in the cloak of the little man look rather ridiculous.

Q — Do you think you might be better off politically to have the Watergate case laid on the table and unveiled, and get it out all at once rather than have it leaked out right up to election day?

A — We can't control that . . . we have expedited the criminal matters as quickly as we can commensurate with a thorough investigation by justice, and the FBI will be seen in the eyes of the people as having made a very, very thorough examination in this when the facts are disclosed.

Q — What in your opinion would be the effect American leadership of the free world if we pull Vietnam in the manner being advocated by McGovern?

A — I think we would have a diplomatic nature we believe any country from that positionational re-