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Agnew Holds His Party Blameless for Watergate

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CLEVELAND, May 31—Vice President Spiro T. Agnew tonight told Ohio Republicans that Watergate was a result of "the misguided zeal of a few individuals" and that the Republican Party should not be blamed for it.

Agnew's 20-minute speech to

the 1,500 who attended the \$150-a-plate dinner was interrupted five times by applause. But the applause was nowhere near as loud as Agnew has received at previous Ohio appearances.

Neither Sen. William Saxbe (R-Ohio) nor Rep. William Minshall (R-Ohio) attended the GOP fund-raising dinner.

Agnew said he was "proud to serve" under President Nixon, a remark which drew only scattered applause.

Agnew said the "vultures" were hoping to find a "corpse of the presidency" but that the "vultures" would be disappointed. "The President is alive and well and just as vigorous as ever," Agnew said.

He said it is "a good time" to be a Republican now and that "I am just as proud of my party tonight as I was on the day I first registered. I know that all of you share that pride with me."

In referring to Watergate, Agnew said, "I do not attempt to assert that certain individuals are without fault or that the Watergate matter is a defensible lark. But I do state that the Republican Party is not involved, not indicted, and not responsible." This drew applause from the crowd.