



Vice President Agnew sets off a charge to dedicate a dam outside Denver. At right, charge explodes in dam area.

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Agnew Backs Nixon on Fighting Back

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DENVER, Aug. 15—Vice President Spiro T. Agnew, in his first public speaking appearances since disclosure that he is under federal investigation in connection with a contractors' kickback scandal in Maryland, tonight stoutly defended President Nixon's right—and by inference his own—to fight back against his critics and accusers.

There was no applause, however, from the international boilermakers' union convention as Agnew, without mentioning either Mr. Nixon's Watergate troubles or his own difficulties, delivered this section of his speech:

"Whether you voted for him [Mr. Nixon] or his opponent, I believe that you respect his right to carry out the job he was elected to do. And right now, ladies and gentlemen, he needs your support in carrying out that job.

"No President expects credit for everything he does simply because he is President. Certainly every public figure must expect to draw some criticism for the way he handles his job. But just as each citizen has a right to criticize those in public office, so does every public official have a right to defend his actions, his honor, his integrity and his good name.

"This is perhaps even more important for a public man whose effectiveness and credibility depend largely upon his reputation, a reputation that he has spent a lifetime building, yet which remains at the mercy of false, and often malicious, accusations leaked to the news media.

"He has a right to defend his reputation as well as a right to do it in a way he considers best for himself and the public he serves. And a President, in defending himself, must look always to the broader interests of his country—look beyond his personal welfare—for if he does not, he will surely betray the people he serves.

"Any man who goes into the political arena expects to receive some wounds," Agnew said. "But the public men who govern best are the ones who have the courage to govern as they think best. For if a President allows himself to be forbidden the performance of his elective purpose because of the condemnation of critics, however well intentioned, then he ceases to govern at all.

"I can assure you, ladies and gentlemen, that this administration is not going to allow that to happen. The President, like other Presidents before him, is not concerned with popularity or glory, but rather with

his responsibilities to the country."

The Vice President spoke shortly after having watched the President deliver his latest television talk on Watergate, in which Mr. Nixon said it was time to look past Watergate to more pressing responsibilities of the presidency. The Vice President's wife, Judy, watched the telecast with her husband in their hotel suite.

Earlier, when asked whether he would have comment on the President's speech, Agnew said he did not believe in "instant analysis" and therefore would not have a comment. In his 1969-70 criticisms of television, what he called "instant analysis" by TV commentators after presidential talks was a principal Agnew theme.

At the boilermakers convention and at the dedication of a new dam site in nearby Littleton this afternoon, Agnew received a warm and enthusiastic reception.

Looking tanned, relaxed and in good humor at the dedication Agnew made no mention of his difficulties, and he gave no indication of noticing anti-Agnew placards held by a few youths.

One sign said: "Watergate—the Spiro of '76?" Another said: "No amnesty for Nixon and Agnew." And still another: "No more damned lies"—an obvious

reference to Agnew's own characterization last week of published allegations that he took cash kickbacks from contractors.

But there were just as many pro-Agnew signs in the crowd of more than 1,000 at the South Platte River dam. Also more than offsetting the anti-Agnew signs was the mood of the spectators, many of whom rushed forward and shook hands with him when he concluded a short talk on flood control.

Among the well-wishers was Wendell Meadows, manager of the Littleton High Circle Savings and Loan Association, until recently a Silver Spring, Md. resident. Meadows told Agnew: "I voted for you three times and I'll vote for you a fourth time."

Meadows, asked how he felt about the investigation of Agnew, said: "If I went out and robbed a bank I could go to the judge and say, 'Give me immunity and I'll accuse the governor of Colorado of anything.' I don't think he's guilty. I like the way he's come out fighting."

Judy Fallin of Denver, holding her 2-year-old child, said: "My faith in Nixon may be a little shaken, but I still trust Vice President Agnew."