

Agnew Gets Cheers at Md. Picnic

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CENTREVILLE, Md., Aug. 18—Vice President Spiro T. Agnew drew repeated cheers and shouts of support here today as he declared at a political picnic, "I intend to fight to establish my innocence of any wrongdoing."

In his first public appearance in his home state since news broke that he is under federal investigation, Agnew drew an enthusiastic response from the crowd of 1,000 as he continued a sharp counteroffensive against the voices of "gloom and despair" in America.

"What we need is hope and faith in America (and to) forget the masochistic (persons who are) constantly looking at all that is wrong," Agnew said.

Smiling and appearing tanned and relaxed, Agnew walked along a roped-off area and shook hands after his 10-minute speech.

See FIRST, A15, Col. 5

FIRST, From A1

"Hang in there!" one man shouted as he shook hands with Agnew.

"I'll be there, don't you worry," the Vice President and former governor of Maryland told the man.

"We're gonna see you in the White House yet," said another.

Agnew came to this largely rural and conservative area to stump for Republican State Sen. Robert E. Bauman of the Upper Shore, who is running in a special election Tuesday for Maryland's First Congressional District seat. It was left vacant by the suicide on May 24 of Rep. William O. Mills, a Republican.

Although the rally was for Bauman, many of those in the crowd said they came to see Agnew.

It was the Vice President's second public speaking appearance since the disclosure two weeks ago that he is under federal investigation in connection with a widespread federal probe in Maryland concerning alleged kickbacks to politicians from contractors doing business with the state.

Agnew spoke Wednesday at a convention in Denver of the International Boilermaker's Union and was warmly received. Here in the state where he had been governor from 1967 to 1969 the response was enthusiastic as Agnew pressed a counteroffensive

against his accusers in a style sharply different from the restrained response of President Nixon to the Watergate scandals.

Agnew, referring to news leaks of the federal investigation, said, "They call themselves informed sources close to the investigation' . . . and they don't have any hesitancy about violating my civil rights . . . I intend to fight to establish my innocence of any wrongdoing."

"Today much of official Washington reminds me of a morbid crowd gathered around a fire-gutted building watching to see who will be the next corpse carried out," Agnew said.

Agnew promised both from the podium and during handshaking among the crowd that he would have "more to say later."

The election campaign here to fill Mills' seat has been laced with talk by both Bauman and his opponent, State Sen. Frederick C. Malkus (D-Lower Shore) about the "evil in government" and of "a terrible air of cynicism among voters."

Mills killed himself after reports in the press that his 1971 campaign had failed to report a \$25,000 contribution from undisclosed Nixon campaign funds.

Each candidate for the congressional seat here has traded on his experience and his conservative views to overcome

this atmosphere of pessimism. No one here seems to know what effect, if any, the Watergate scandals and the investigation of Agnew—and Agnew's appearance here today—may have on the election.

Agnew said in his speech that the nation will be watching the results of this special election. It is the first sharply contested federal election since the Watergate scandals reached superheated proportions with the resignations of presidential aides in April and the televised hearings of the Senate Select Watergate Committee.

The Vice President said that President Nixon had asked him to "say a special word of support for State Sen. Bauman."

"1973 has been a rather tough year for Republicans everywhere," Agnew said

The mostly well-dressed, middle-aged and nearly all-white crowd expressed everything from mild to strong enthusiasm for Agnew, Nixon and Bauman.

"I feel that he's (Agnew) innocent," said George Furbush, a 75-year-old retired timekeeper. "When it all comes out they'll find it's all a lot of talk. A man wouldn't turn over his (personal financial) records the way (Agnew) did if he was guilty. He had nothing to hide whatsoever."

Victoria Hastings, a Sharptown housewife, said, "They

(Agnew and Nixon) can't help it if they got skewered by the newspapers."

Her father, Robert Owens, 49, Pocomoke City, said, "I'm 100 per cent for (Agnew) even with the scandals. Man, I am. If Bobby Baker had had a Republican Congress this Watergate thing would be a small thing. I think it's just politics, any way you look at it."

Earlier at the rally here U.S. Agriculture Secretary Earl Butz received applause with his reference to the Senate Committee investigating the Watergate scandal as "the committee to destroy the President."

Butz also warmed the crowd with praises of the American free enterprise system and the productivity of farmers.

Earlier, Butz, who has disagreed with the Nixon administration on the price freeze, wandered among the crowd picking out farmers to talk to.

"You a farmer?" he asked one man.

"Yes, sir."

"You work for a living," said Butz. The man mentioned the price freeze and its effect on farmers and Butz said, "I'm gonna fight that, boy. Stick in there with me."

Judge to Oversee Agnew Probe Named

BALTIMORE, Aug. 18 (UPI)—A federal judge from Virginia was assigned Saturday

to oversee any grand jury investigation of Vice President Spiro T. Agnew in an alleged Maryland political kickback scheme.

U.S. District Judge Walter E. Hoffman of the Eastern District of Virginia was appointed to the task because all nine Maryland federal judges disqualified themselves last week.

Hoffman was named by Chief Judge Clement F. Haynsworth of the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, who supervises the courts in the region which includes Maryland. Haynsworth disclosed his decision in a letter to Maryland's Chief District Judge Edward Northrop.

Northrop announced last Wednesday that all of the Maryland federal judges, six Republicans and three Democrats, disqualified themselves because of Agnew's "unique position" and his close ties to Maryland, where he served as governor from 1967 until 1969, when he took office as vice president.

All but one of the Maryland judges, C. Stanley Blair, will be free to handle any litigation arising from the grand jury investigation that does not involve Agnew. Blair, who previously had been supervising the grand jury, asked to be relieved of the case entirely. He served as Secretary of State during Agnew's governorship and was chief of staff for the Vice President in 1966.