

Mr. Agnew Returns

Vice President Agnew appears to be the latest recruit in President Nixon's campaign to portray the investigation of the Watergate scandals as an obstruction of "the business of the people." This tactic depicts as villains those who want to get to the bottom of the White House horrors instead of those who committed them.

It is a line that cannot be allowed to go unchallenged. Nothing could be more damaging to the future integrity of national politics than ultimate triumph of the theory that the Watergate investigations are nothing but a ploy by opponents of the Nixon Administration to milk the issue for partisan gain.

Mr. Agnew characterized Watergate as "the misguided actions of a few zealots." Yet the disclosures have already led to dismissal of virtually the entire senior staff of Presidential advisers, the indictment of two former Cabinet officers, the replacement of the acting director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the resignation of the Attorney General. Are these the "few zealots"?

Mr. Agnew said: "But try to find one of these Watergate experts who knows or cares much about the energy crisis, inflation or the problems of the American farmer." As every American knows, Watergate was brought about by precisely the same people who have failed totally in solving the same energy crisis, inflation and the problems of the American farmer. Indeed, such maneuvers as the wheat and milk deals which have helped bring American farmers and/or consumers to their present bind are also clearly part of the Spirit of Watergate.

Mr. Agnew has called what he considers an undue preoccupation with Watergate an "indirect obstruction of the will of the people," just as Mr. Nixon has complained that reporters who ask questions about Watergate are ignoring "the business of the people." Even if the Watergate investigations could legitimately be blamed for the American people's bread-and-butter problems, which is blatantly untrue, these statements would still represent an extraordinary distortion of the people's business.

Can anything be of more immediate concern to the people than the threat to their civil liberties, the invasion of their privacy, the subversion of their system of free elections and the arrogation of unlimited power to the Presidential office?