

Brennan Choice Called Political Move

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 30 — Asked today for reaction to the appointment of Peter J. Brennan as Secretary of Labor, the president of a fairly liberal A.F.L.-C.I.O. union replied:

"I'm like a man watching his mother-in-law drive his new Cadillac over a cliff. My feelings are mixed." "Mixed" is the

way many labor officials seem to feel about the new Labor Secretary. Generally, there is some gratification that the Department of Labor will be headed by a union man. But there is also disappointment and even shock that President Nixon choose a "hard-hat" leader of what is considered the self-centered, conservative wing of the labor movement.

From Mr. Nixon's point of view, Mr. Brennan, the president of the New York Building and Construction Trades Council, was an appropriate choice. Construction workers were prominent among the blue-collar vote that the President pried away from the Democratic party in his successful bid for re-election earlier this month.

Political Strategy

Some liberal union leaders, still bitter over what they regarded as a sell-out to the Republican party by conservative labor officials during the recent campaign, referred to the appointment of Mr. Brennan as a payoff for political services.

But, observers said, it would be a mistake to regard the appointment as no more than a reward for past services. Mr. Brennan in the Labor Department represents, they said, not the celebration of past victories but the continuation of a successful political strategy.

For Mr. Nixon's political advisers believe they can consolidate and make permanent the gains they achieved among blue-collar workers in 1972.

The hard-hats, the teamsters and the longshoremen who voted for Mr. Nixon this month were once part of the Democratic party's coalition. Mr. Nixon is trying to make this part of the labor movement an integral part of the Republican constituency.

Ideological divisions have long existed within the American trade union movement. They are divisions largely — although not entirely — between craft unions and industrial unions, with the industrial unions generally more committed to government programs for social and economic progress.

Divisions Exposed

Under the strong leadership of George Meany, president of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations, these divisions have, to a certain extent, been ameliorated. But Mr. Nixon was able to expose and exploit these divisions and to pry loose a substantial fragment of labor support.

The result was that the member unions of the A.F.L.-C.I.O. split sharply into pro-Nixon, pro-McGovern and neutralist factions.

Some labor officials believe that the appointment of Mr. Brennan — who symbolizes the hard-hat — will drive a new wedge into the fissures opened within the labor movement by the national elections this year.

Mr. Brennan may come to Washington genuinely seeking to represent all of the labor movement. But to at least a portion of organized labor, Mr. Brennan's outlook on social issues is regarded as alien and distasteful.

Moreover, Mr. Brennan's ap-

pointment will exacerbate the existing alienation between organized labor and parts of the civil rights movements, according to comments from both union and civil rights officials.

The construction trades, and Mr. Brennan himself, have been accused of excluding blacks and other minority groups from jobs within the relatively high-paying construction industry.

Another complaint being made by labor officials is that a union man serving as Secretary of Labor in a Republican Administration will limit the ability of the A.F.L.-C.I.O. and other labor organizations to maintain an adversary role and to press for effective legislation and political action.

On the other hand, union officials agree that Mr. Brennan as Labor Secretary would be a guarantee that the Nixon Administration honors its campaign pledge not to press for any antilabor legislation.

He would also be a Secretary who could work in close rapport with Mr. Meany, who also is a former building tradesman from New York. Mr. Meany's relations with the outgoing Secretary, James D. Hodgson, were cool and, at times, barely correct.