

President Briefs Top Labor Leaders On Cambodia Push

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WASHINGTON, May 12—

President Nixon gave a sympathetic audience of labor leaders a fresh report today on what he called the "enormous success" of American and South Vietnamese military operations in Cambodia.

In a surprise visit to the headquarters of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations, the President also encountered another harsh attack on his Administration's economic policies.

Mr. Nixon made the short drive around Lafayette Park to the union offices shortly before noon, just as the labor federation's executive council was releasing a statement saying, "The Administration's campaign against inflation has been a complete failure."

Orders Economic Talks

The President later directed Secretary of Labor George P. Shultz to organize a new conference with union executives on economic issues. But virtually all of the closed 45-minute meeting this morning was devoted to the latest maps and statistics on the Allied sweep of enemy sanctuaries in Cambodia.

Ronald L. Ziegler, White House press secretary, said that the President had reported a new total of 5,000 of the enemy killed in action as well as the allied capture of more

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Associated Press
PRESIDENTIAL VISIT: George Meany, president of the A.F.L.-C.I.O., chats with President Nixon following group's Executive Council meeting, where Administration was scored.

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ammunition than Vietcong and North Vietnamese soldiers expended in South Vietnam in the last five or six months.

George Meany, president of the labor federation, reaffirmed his support of the American operations in Cambodia and quoted the President's report that "they're knocking out the sanctuaries ahead of schedule."

Representative Gerald R. Ford of Michigan, the House minority leader, recounted the same reports from the battlefield at a businessmen's lunch here today and said that the principal concern of American military men now is how to ship the captured stores of rice

and ammunition out of Cambodia.

Mr. Ziegler said the President had reported the capture of 1,300 enemy prisoners, 4 million pounds of rice, 8.4 million rounds of small ammunition, 11,000 grenades, 10,000 mortars and nearly 9,000 rockets. The White House gave no figures on American and South Vietnamese casualties, but said they were "very, very low."

Although the count of 5,000 enemy dead comes directly from the Pentagon, Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird has declined to vouch for that figure and is known to believe it is unreliable.

Mr. Meany said today that,

although the President had not asked for labor's support of the offensive in Cambodia, he was confident he spoke for nine-tenths of the 35-man executive council in endorsing the expansion of the fighting as a strictly defensive maneuver.

"I accept without question," Mr. Meany said, "that he's knocking out these sanctuaries to protect the lives of our fighting men."

At the same time, Mr. Meany stepped up his attack on Mr. Nixon's economic policies. "Prices have gone up, unemployment has grown, and the nation has crossed the threshold of recession," he said, declaring that rising interest rates had "practically stopped the housing industry in its tracks."

Credit Curbs Urged

The executive council of the labor federation urged the President to impose selective credit controls to reduce the interest rate on certain loan categories, particularly for housing, under provisions of an act that Mr. Nixon signed into law last December but has so far declined to implement.

At a news conference after the meeting with the President, Mr. Meany released a resolution by the executive council mourning the death of Walter P. Reuther, "a dedicated trade unionist who well and truly served his fellow man." He also delivered a mild reprimand to the construction workers who attacked young antiwar demonstrators last Friday in lower Manhattan.

Mr. Meany said there had been no mention of Mr. Reuther or the construction workers in the session with Mr. Nixon.

Deplore Violence

Asked to comment on the construction workers, Mr. Meany responded, "I don't like anybody beating anybody up. I don't like to see construction workers resorting to violence. In my book, violence begets violence. But I certainly feel the construction workers are no more to be blamed than the students who were resorting to violence."

A spokesman for Mr. Meany said later that the federation had named an eight-man delegation to Mr. Reuther's funeral on Friday but that Mr. Meany, whose relations with the late United Automobile Workers president were embittered in the last several years, would not attend the service.

The White House reported late today that President Nixon had sent personal letters to the parents of the four students killed by Ohio National Guard fire May 4 at Kent State University. The President considers the letters private and will not release them to the press, a spokesman said.

The slain youths were William K. Schroeder of orain, Ohio; Sandra Lee Scheuer of Youngstown, Ohio; Jeffrey Glen Miller of Plainview, L.I., and Allison Krause of Pittsburgh.