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By NEIL GILBRIDE

AP Labor Writer

MIAMI BEACH, Fla. AP - President Nixon challenged his harshest labor critics face-to-face Friday and told them he will use his powers to the fullest to control wages and prices whether they cooperate or not.

"We want the participation of labor," Nixon told AFL-CIO convention delegates who voted Thursday to refuse cooperation with his Pay Board's wage controls.

"But whether we get that participation or not, it is my obligation as President of the United States to make this program of stopping the rise in the cost of living succeed, and to the extent that my powers allow it, I shall do exactly that," Nixon added.

The President got a cool reception.

There were ripples of derisive laughter from some of the more than 2,000 delegates, officials and others when Nixon said his recent 90-day wage-price freeze "was a remarkable success" and "if you don't think so, go home and ask your wives who go to the grocery store."

The convention's musicians did not play the traditional "Hail to the Chief" when Nixon entered, and AFL-CIO officials overruled White House aides who had wanted the President introduced over the loudspeaker.

When Nixon finished his speech, he started to shake hands with some delegates near the speaker's platform until AFL-CIO President George Meany said, "Will delegates and alternates return to their seats."

Meany had been watching in apparent amusement when he suddenly picked up his gavel and called the convention to order while Nixon was still on the floor, shaking hands and chatting with delegates. The President turned, gave Meany a brief look and stalked away.

"We will now proceed with Act II," cracked Meany, who the day before had verbally flayed Nixon's economic controls and said that he and four other labor members of Nixon's Pay Board will refuse to cooperate with the board or its decisions until they win their demands for back pay for the freeze and full payment of all negotiated wage hikes.

Later Friday, White House aides announced the President had cut short his Florida weekend and was returning to Washington. En route back, he stopped Air Force I at Jacksonville, Fla., to pick up his daughter, Julie Nixon Eisenhower.

The aides said Nixon's sudden departure had nothing to do with the AFL-CIO speech and did not indicate a crisis of any sort.

"He's always flexible," a spokesman said.

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In Washington, a White House aide said Nixon went before the AFL-CIO convention against the advice of all his advisers who feared his remarks might be construed as antilabor.

In his speech, Nixon quoted Meany's remark that "if the President of the United States doesn't want our membership on the Pay Board, he knows exactly what he can do." The audience cheered, apparently in support of the Meany quote.

President Meany is correct. I know exactly what I can do—and I am going to do it," Nixon continued.

I think it is time that we all understand just where we stand on this, where we agree and where we disagree," he went on.

I want a program that is fair to all elements of this society, fair to organized labor particularly, as I have emphasized.

But as President of all the American people, it is my duty to do what I THINK IS BEST FOR ALL THE American people. And my friends, whatever some of you may think, a great majority of the American people, and a majority of union members, want to stop the rise in the cost of living—and that's what we are going to do."

On Thursday, Meany had accused public and industry members of the Pay Board of combining to defeat labor wage proposals in a program favoring big business.

Nixon discarded his prepared text as "the usual laundry" list of his administration's accomplishments.

I am very proud of this list," he said, but "you like it straight from the shoulder."

He said he would stand by the prepared text, in which he said "for those who have maintained that the freeze was intended as a plum to business, let me point out that corporate profits declined during the freeze."

Nixon also dropped from his actual speech his prepared appeal that "I am asking the support of the AFL-CIO for the critical second phase of this effort to restore economic stability to this nation."

AFL-CIO officials said Thursday's convention action meant Meany and other labor members of Nixon's Pay Board will not vote on board decisions unless crucial to a labor position. The labor chieftain said he will urge unions to fight wage controls through courts, Congress, strikes and boycotts against companies that refuse to fully honor existing and future labor contracts.

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"If the President doesn't like the terms we laid down, he can kick us off," Meany said.

Nixon also cited Friday's government report of the lowest rise in living costs in four years as evidence his economic program is working.

The President laced his speech with references of gratitude to labor for its past support of his Vietnam war and national defense policies, but got little applause.

He also called for a renewed American pride in work, saying that "the only thing demeaning in America is for one man to refuse to work and to let another man who does work pay taxes to keep him on welfare. Any work is preferable to welfare."

This drew some applause, although Meany has accused Nixon of abandoning the nation's poor by postponing his welfare reform plan, and discriminating against workers with poverty level incomes in his wage controls.

Nixon said some of his advisers suggested he skip the AFL-CIO speech, but he overlooked them.

"I will tell you why I came here: because while some of you may be against me politically and some of you may be against my party, I know from the experience over the past three years that when the chips are down, organized labor is for America, and that is why I am here before this convention today," Nixon said.

Most AFL-CIO leaders are committed to ousting Nixon from the White House next year.

Sen. George McGovern of South Dakota, a candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination, followed Nixon a little later and said:

"The best way to launch Phase 3 is to phase Nixon out of office in 1972."

McGovern said all labor contracts should be honored during Nixon's wage controls, and urged an excess profits tax and other taxes aimed at blocking American firms from moving operations abroad to take advantage of cheap labor.

"Thank you for your remarks in which you face the real gut issues of this convention," Meany told McGovern.

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