

Conservatives Say Nixon's Left Them

By Bill Stall

LOS ANGELES — (AP) — President Nixon has been accused in a forum of leading conservatives of abandoning them and their principles because of political pressures — particularly on the subjects of Red China, wage-price controls and national security.

But California Gov. Reagan came to Nixon's defense, saying, "There are times in which you have to get good field position before you can throw the long pass . . . Sometimes we have to have the faith and the trust that there is a game plan."

The sharpest criticism came from Republican Congressman John Ashbrook of Ohio, who has announced he will challenge Nixon in primary elections.

"We have not brought the change we promised in 1968," Ashbrook said in a 90-minute television discussion taped Wednesday for airing nationally tonight on Public Broadcasting Service. "We have continued almost unabated with the same type of reliance on governmental programs."

Party Unity

Ashbrook argued that conservatives must not mute their criticism in the name of Republican party unity.

"As conservatives, do we sit back and say that's all right? Four more years and we'll get it done? Or do we challenge some of the basic assumptions that our administration is throwing out?" Ashbrook added.

He and Daniel Mahoney, chairman of the New York Conservative party, were the chief critics of the Nixon administration while Reagan and former Ambassador Clare Booth Luce defended the President.

Milton Friedman, former economic adviser to Nixon, was sharply critical of the President's economic policies but said, "I think we have to make a distinction between criticizing the program, which I certainly would do, and eliminating support of the candidate of the party. I support Mr. Nixon even though I object to these policies."

Mrs. Luce, a former congresswoman, said, "It would be naive to expect that Nixon was going to be 100 percent pure conservative. I'm amazed he's stuck as well as he has."

Challenger

And Reagan, who challenged Nixon unsuccessfully for the GOP presidential nomination in 1968, said if there's any failing, it has been on the part of conservatives in the party to support the President against pressure from the liberal side.

Reagan asked, "What happens if we do anything to tarnish the image and the opposition wins? We're going to have Taiwan sold down the river, we're going to have permanent wage and price controls, we're going to have socialized medicine."

At one point, Ashbrook accused the Nixon administration of a failure of leadership, but said he pursued his candidacy with some temerity because of pressure on Republicans not to criticize their President.

"I think most of the conservative leaders have locked themselves into this administration, have said in effect we're not going to criticize."

But Ashbrook added, "I basically feel there has been a failure of leadership," and said he would speak out.

The host for the show, columnist and editor William F. Buckley, asked, "What's so sacrilegious about that?"

Buckley is one of a group of conservatives who suspended their support for Nixon over admission of Red China and the expelling of Nationalist China from the United Nations.

Also on the program was his brother, Sen. James Buckley, Conservative from New York.

Ashbrook and Mahoney said Nixon has allowed the Soviet Union to surpass the United States in the field of defense.

"The ingredient lacking is not the billions of dollars we could spend. It is the attitude and lack of leadership."

But Reagan and Sen. Buckley contended the mood of the country hasn't been proper for the President to reassert U.S. military power.

"Now that Vietnam has

been defused, I think the time is now and the public could be receptive," Buckley said.

Reagan then slipped into football jargon and said policies must have an adequate chance to be tested.

"If it fails you stand up and say, 'Okay, let's get a new quarterback.'"

"But you have to have enough faith to let them try the game plan first," he said.

Reagan said Nixon told him he felt alone in fighting for the Amchitka nuclear weapons test in Alaska and pushed the anti-ballistic missile system through the Senate by just one vote.

Reagan added, "My complaint about our own breed of cat, of conservative, is that we elected a man and then we have sat back and say 'Now do it.'"

"What we need more is

Sen. Buckley and the rest of us speaking to forums and arousing the people," he said.

Reagan had been a staunch critic of Nixon's welfare reform plan and battled with the federal antipoverty program over legal aid to the poor in California, but the criticism has waned in the past six months and Reagan has committed himself fully to Nixon's reelection in 1972.

Mahoney countered Reagan's "game plan" argument by commenting, "Suppose, and stranger things have happened, that President Nixon will not be re-elected and we've spent four years being very quiet about the defense question . . . You could end up in a very serious situation in terms of national interest if he were to lose."