

Nixon, in a 'Symbolic' Act, Signs Bill on Dock Talks

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 21 — still above its guidelines.

The White House, making a show of its communications channels with Peking, announced today that "as a symbolic gesture," President Nixon had signed in China legislation to force striking longshoremen back to work and to arbitrate terms of their contract.

The signing was announced by Secretary of Labor James D. Hodgson at a White House news briefing.

The measure, which was signed in Peking by the President, has no real effect since the striking dock workers were already back on the job and since it would not be binding should the workers again strike because of any action by the Pay Board, which must approve the newly negotiated contract.

The measure the President signed falls short of the provisions in pending legislation, backed by the Administration, which would give the President broad authority to intervene in strikes having major impact on the nation's economy. While praising Congress for its action to end the West Coast strike, the President again pleaded for Congressional approval of his proposed legislation.

Striking West Coast longshoremen began to return to work today under a contract settlement that provides for a 41 per cent wage increase over a two-year period. The contract provides for a 16.9 per cent wage increase the first year.

Secretary Hodgson refused to speculate today on whether the Pay Board would approve the contract, as it has contracts for two other powerful unions that negotiated contracts above the 5.5 per cent general guideline.

The board approved a contract providing a 15 per cent wage increase for the nation's coal miners and a 10 per cent increase for railroad signalmen.

But the Pay Board rejected a 12 per cent raise for aerospace workers and, instead, allowed a wage increase of 8 per cent

Secretary Hodgson acknowledged to reporters at the White House today that should the Pay Board turn down the longshoremen's contract with the result of another strike, new legislation would be needed to force workers back to the bargaining table.

Mr. Hodgson said he was in touch with the White House in Peking earlier in the day, shortly after Mr. Nixon and his party returned from a state banquet. He said he had spoken by telephone to the Presidential press secretary, Ronald L. Ziegler, and to H. R. Halde- man, White House adviser on domestic affairs.

"They were gratified by the end of the strike and buoyed by the festivities (in Peking)," he said. He added that the telephone communications "are absolutely superb."

"It is like you are talking to somebody across town," he said.