

NYTimes

Nixon Wooing of Labor Vote Dates to 1970

Hard Hats' Support of Cambodia Role Led to Strategy

By PHILIP SHABECOFF

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Oct. 11—"I was elected to smash the labor bosses."—Representative Richard M. Nixon, quoted in an interview on his first day in Congress, Jan. 3, 1947.

"There will be no antilabor plank in this platform."—President Nixon's instructions to the Republican platform committee, August, 1972, as quoted by an Administration aide.

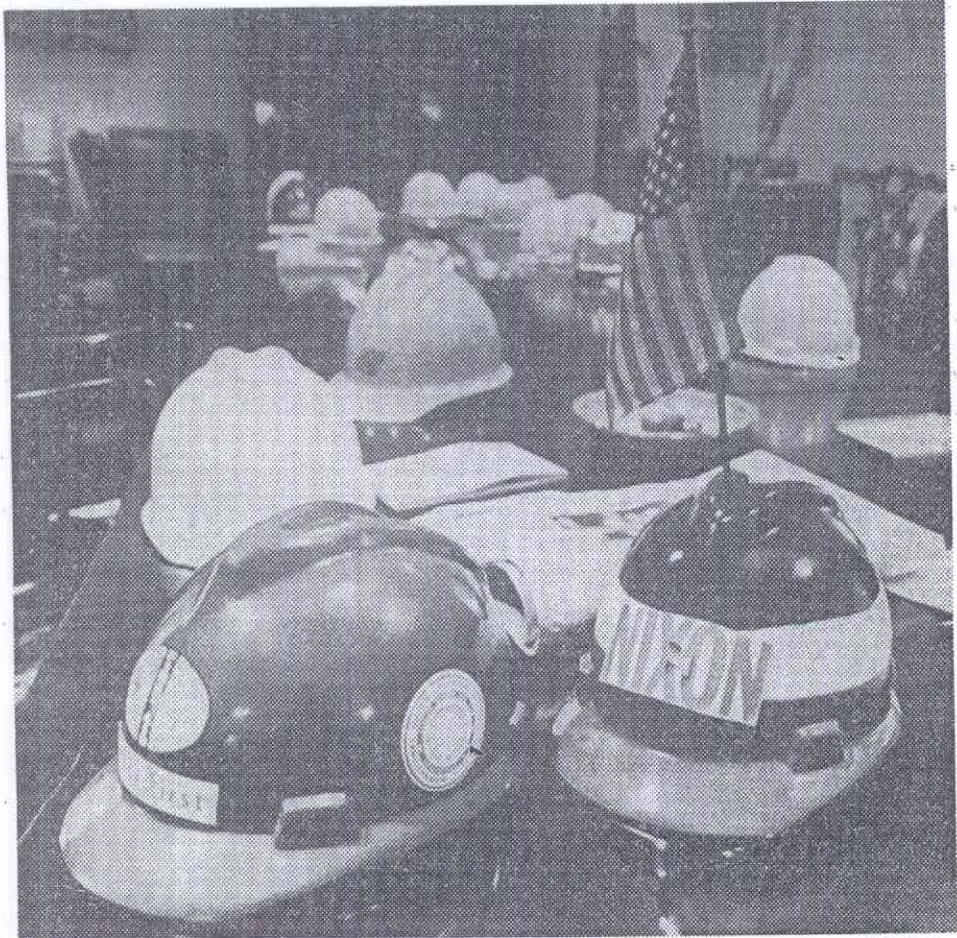
President Nixon, considered an adversary of organized labor for much of his long political career, has now won substantial labor support in his bid for re-election. How did he do it?

It was during the turmoil surrounding the United States invasion of Cambodia in 1970 that the President decided he could split a significant portion of the labor vote away from the Democratic party, according to labor sources.

In the intervening two and a half years, the President and his campaign aides have energetically and systematically courted these labor votes.

The Events Recalled

A well-placed Administration



The White House

These hard hats were left at the White House by union leaders who were invited there after the President heard that thousands of workers had marched on Wall Street to support his policy. Charles W. Colson, special counsel, directs Mr. Nixon's labor drive.

source recalled the events during the Cambodian crisis that led to the President's decision: "We were sitting around the White House feeling that the country was collapsing around us. Thousands of kids were marching in Washington and then that Kent State thing happened."

"Then we heard that 100,000 hard hats were marching on Wall Street in New York in support of the President. It had an electrifying effect on everybody, including the President. It struck him that those workers had the same feeling about the country he did."

It now appears that President Nixon has been more successful in courting the political support of organized labor than any Republican Presidential candidate in recent history.

He has been endorsed by unions or the leaders of unions representing about five million workers, according to the Committee for the Re-election of the President. Campaign aides expect that Mr. Nixon will receive double the 25 to 35 per cent of the blue-collar vote he received in his race against Hubert H. Humphrey in 1968.

His formal support from labor is admittedly narrow so far. It comes chiefly—although not exclusively—from the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, the construction unions and the maritime trades. These are unions on the relatively affluent and conservative end of the labor spectrum.

8 Million For McGovern

Senator McGovern has been endorsed by even more unions, with a total membership of more than eight million workers. Unions that have endorsed the Democratic ticket, moreover, are those traditionally active in national politics. But as one Democratic campaign official noted glumly, the Democratic party must have solid labor support to win even in the close elections. "We haven't lost all that much of labor, but what we've lost is enough to fix our clock," he said.

The reasons for Mr. Nixon's success with organized labor are many and complex. Some will emerge only in the future.

But as Secretary of Labor James D. Hodgson pointed out in a recent interview, President Nixon "kept the door open" to labor even when he was being vilified as "Labor's number one enemy" by the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations, and others.

Thus, the President and his political strategists set about "peeling off," as one disgruntled Democratic party official put it, that segment of the trade union movement that could be lured from its traditional allegiance to the Democratic party.

Many of the unions that have

endorsed the President thus far have received governmental favors, concessions or preferences of some sort.

Although the Administration protests that it was a coincidence, the teamsters' endorsement of the President and the White House decision to drop plans for antistrike legislation in the transportation industry occurred within a few days of each other.

Wage increases due under the teamster's master freight contract were approved by the Pay Board although there was a question—resolved by "technical" procedures—about whether they conformed to the board's rules. Frank E. Fitzsimmons, president of the teamsters, remained on the board when the other labor members quit last March.

Although there has been some speculation that the Administration let the former teamster president, James R. Hoffa, out of prison in return for a union endorsement for the President, Administration sources make a persuasive case that this was not so.

The construction unions have also been the beneficiary of some special treatment by the Administration. The construction industry has been given a separate wage control board and construction wage increases, while reduced, are still running ahead of wage increases going to workers in the rest of the economy.

Funds for Construction

Recently, substantial Federal funds for construction projects were unfrozen and pumped into the economy, creating additional jobs for construction workers.

The construction unions have made no secret of the fact they are pleased with the Administration's modification of the Philadelphia Plan, which originally was designed to increase the number of minority workers in the building trades.

Mr. Nixon's strong support among the maritime trades, including an endorsement by the International Longshoremen's Association, reflects the Administrations' support for legislation to help rebuild the merchant marine.

The president of the Ameri-

can Federation of Government Employees, John F. Griner, made a personal endorsement of the President after the Administration approved wage concessions for Federal blue-collar workers. Mr. Griner made his endorsement despite objections from members of the union.

Both Republican and Democratic campaign officials concede that the decision by George Meany, president of the labor federation, to remain neutral was crucial to the President's ability to win labor support.

"I would rather have had Meany's neutrality than the endorsement of all construction trades and the teamster's combined," one Administration official said. "It's not so much what he brought us as what he denied the opposition."

Clash With Meany

Last winter, when the President received a cool welcome at the A.F.L.-C.I.O. convention in Miami and when the Administration engaged in a verbal assault on Mr. Meany himself, it seemed as though Mr. Meany and his labor federation would be the most active and effective opponent of the President's re-election bid.

At that time, the well-placed Administration source disclosed, many of the President's closest political strategists were urging him to adopt a strong, antilabor posture in his campaign tactics, in much the way that President Franklin D. Roosevelt once ran against the National Association of Manufacturers.

But Mr. Nixon remained convinced that he could attract substantial labor support and rejected the advice of his political advisers.

When Mr. Meany fell ill after the A.F.L.-C.I.O. convention, President Nixon sent him a warm personally written note along with a box of cigars.

More important, the Administration gave up its efforts to block the payment of deferred and retroactive wages through the Pay Board.

Although Mr. Meany and his colleagues walked of the Pay Board, his tone toward the Administration softened.

Gus Tyler, assistant president and political officer of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers

Union traces Mr. Nixon's success to his application of his Southern and Roman Catholic strategies toward the relatively affluent blue-collar worker.

The Southern strategy is directed at "white ethnics" living in embattled urban areas who are angered by issues such as crime, busing and quotas. The Catholic strategy, according to Mr. Tyler, appeals to traditionalism among workers and rejects abortion, marijuana, rights for homosexuals and amnesty for Vietnam deserters—all of which are, somehow, linked to Senator McGovern.

The wooing of the labor vote is directed by Charles W. Colson, special counsel to the President. Donald F. Rodgers, who comes from the building trades in New York City, was installed in the White House as consultant to the President for labor under Mr. Colson, a job that will be permanent if Mr. Nixon is reelected.

Bernard E. DeLury, assistant industrial commissioner of New York State, the son of the head of the New York sanitation workers union, was named executive director of labor affairs of the Committee for the Re-Election of the President.

Worked for Rockefeller

Both Mr. Rodgers and Mr. DeLury had worked for the re-election of Governor Rockefeller in New York and both believe that Mr. Rockefeller's success with labor paved the way for President Nixon's courtship of union support.

"We were all lifelong Democrats and many of us still are," Mr. Rodgers said. "But Rockefeller showed us we can get the ear of a Republican politician and that not only will he listen to us, he will do something to help us."

At Democratic national headquarters, one melancholy campaign official summed up the President's technique in seeking labor support.

"Nixon gnaws around the edges of a worker's life. He hasn't touched the central, trade union part. But he gnaws a little at the Catholic part, a little at the Polish part, a little at the patriotic part and a little at the antihippie part."

"After a while, he has an awful lot of that worker."