

Meany Attack on Nixon Cheered By Construction Union Leaders

By PHILIP SHABECOFF

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 1 — Leaders of the hard-hat building and construction unions applauded vigorously today as George Meany, president of the A.F.L.-C.I.O., said that "the American people have completely lost confidence" in President Nixon and his Administration. The leaders, representatives to a legislative conference of the Building and Construction Trades Department of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations, also cheered when told their executive committee had voted unanimously this morning against any extension of wage controls in their industry.

A year ago, the same delegates gave a warm welcome to President Nixon, whom many had supported actively in the 1972 Presidential election. Today no member of the Nixon Administration appeared on the union platform, not even Secretary of Labor Peter J. Brennan, the former leader of the New York building trades who is a symbol of Mr. Nixon's erstwhile special relationship with the hard-hats.

Scathing Words

At today's meeting, the union leaders were in obvious accord with Mr. Meany and other speakers who excoriated the President. They responded enthusiastically when Mr. Meany urged strong political action by labor in the forthcoming Congressional elections so that "we, as a group of workers millions strong, can play our part in giving America back to its people."

Mr. Meany had scathing words for almost all Administration activities, including foreign policy. "I pray every night that Henry Kissinger won't give the Russians the Washington Monument — he's given them every God damn thing else," said the veteran labor

leader in the noisy, smoke-filled ballroom of the Washington Hilton Hotel.

But Mr. Meany and other speakers reserved their sharpest criticism for what they said was the Administration's mismanagement of the economy.

Carl Albert, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, asserted that the President's policies "have left the economy in a shambles and have badly hurt workers and their families, especially construction workers."

"This country needs a Nixon-proof, veto-proof, impoundmentproof Congress, the Oklahoma Democrat said.

Senator Henry M. Jackson, Democrat of Washington, predicted that corporate reports coming out in the next few weeks would show oil profits in the first quarter of 1974 rising to "obscene levels."

"Mismagement of our economy is so bad that President Nixon may be the first President to get his picture on a postage-due stamp," Senator Jackson said.

The president of the Construction Trades Department, Frank Bonadio, noting that the purchasing power of workers — particularly construction workers — has declined, said that the building trades would not accept any form of wage controls after the legislative authority for the controls program expires on April 30.

The construction industry was the first sector of the economy to have wage controls placed on it in 1971. Administration officials have said that they would like some sort of transitional wage controls to remain after April 30.

In another labor development today, union and management negotiators in the steel industry gathered at the Shoreham Hotel here in an effort to reach agreement on a new national wage contract before April 15.