

49 Informal Exchange With Reporters About a Meeting With the Executive Council of the AFL-CIO.

February 19, 1973

REPORTER. How did you feel about your meeting with George Meany and the labor leaders?

THE PRESIDENT. It was a very constructive meeting. We had an opportunity to talk not only to the executive meeting

but the presidents of some of the international unions. It was an opportunity to tell them what the attitudes of the Administration would be on the subjects of major concern to them and to most of the American people—on questions like trade,

on questions like controlling the price of the cost of living, and keeping down particularly food costs, which concern working people and all people, and also on questions of national security, in which organized labor has always taken a very, very responsible position.

I think the point Mr. Meany emphasized in introducing me, and one that I emphasized after the meeting—both in it and afterwards—is very simply that during the difficult periods when we have attempted to bring the war in Vietnam to a conclusion in the right way, in a way that our POW's could come off those planes with their heads high, knowing that they had not fought in vain, knowing they had accomplished the objective of the United States, which very simply was to prevent the imposition by force of a Communist government on 17 million

people of South Vietnam—that could not have been achieved had it not been for the support of millions of Americans and particularly, as I emphasized to them, it could not have been achieved had it not been for the steadfast, outspoken support of most of the leaders of organized labor.

Most of them are Democrats, as I pointed out, but when it came to the problem of national security, when it came to standing by the President, whether it was this President or his predecessor, in attempting to achieve peace with honor, the leaders of organized labor were always standing firm, and I expressed appreciation for that.

Q. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 12:20 p.m. at the Inverrary Golf and Country Club, Lauderhill, Fla.