

Clinton scolds labor forces

WASHINGTON — Using harsh language against an old ally, President Clinton said organized labor is strong-arming lawmakers with "roughshod, musclebound tactics" to scuttle the North American Free Trade Agreement.



In a rare and sweeping Sunday morning television interview, Clinton also insisted that North Korea cannot be allowed to develop a nuclear bomb.

"We have to be firm about it," he said, but refused to discuss the possibility of a pre-emptive strike against the communist nation's nuclear facilities.

Clinton said he now understands how a president can become "out of touch and maybe out of harmony with the American people."

Aides said his attack on labor was not scripted, but the remarks were astonishing for a Democratic president, even on a free-trade issue that has spawned an odd menagerie of political coalitions.

"At least for the undecided Democrats, our big problem is the raw muscle, the sort of naked pressure that the labor forces have put on," Clinton said.

He said unions are privately threatening to cut financial support and field opponents if lawmakers support the free-trade deal with Mexico and Canada.

"The president knows better than that," AFL-CIO spokesman Rex Hardesty said in a telephone interview after the show. "He knows what our record is with seeking working-rights protection in trade agreements."

The free-trade deal, which comes to a vote Nov. 17, is about 30 votes short of the majority needed to pass it in the House, Clinton said. "I think we'll make it, however," he said.

Opponents, most visibly former presidential candidate Ross Perot, believe the pact would cost thousands of jobs. Clinton said Vice President Al Gore will fare well in his Tuesday night debate with Perot, although the Texas billionaire "is the master of the one-liner and the emotional retort."

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Water scarcity becoming a problem, report says

WASHINGTON — People from Los Angeles to Beijing are having to look farther and farther for fresh water, and a new report says water scarcity is a spreading global problem.

Proposals for solving the problem have ranged from towing in icebergs from Antarctica or giant plastic bladders filled with lake water to building desalination plants or international water pipelines.

But these ideas will not be enough to quench the world's thirst, said Bob Engelman, co-author of the report by Population Action International.

"Expense keeps getting in the way," Engelman said.

"The bottom line of this is simply that the rate of population growth in countries experiencing water scarcity is vastly outpacing population growth of the world as a whole."

By 2025, one out of three people will be living in countries with inadequate fresh water supplies, said the report "Sustaining Water: Population and the Future of Renewable Water Supplies."

The current ratio is about one out of 15.

Over the next three decades, between 46 and 52 countries will be either "water-stressed" or "water-scarce," the report said.

"There are no substitutes — as human populations grow, there's less renewable water for each person," said Engelman.

Even in the United States, which has abundant fresh water supplies nationally, regional demands often exceed supply, the report said. It cited efforts by water-poor urban areas in California to draw from water-rich areas around the state.

California wildfire victims try to recover among ashes

MALIBU, Calif. — Fire-devastated communities sought solace at church services Sunday, while the American Red Cross reported damage more extensive than previously thought.

A Red Cross survey counted 390 residences destroyed, seven with major damage and 51 with minor damage, spokeswoman Barbara Wilks said. The tally of lost homes was up from an earlier figure of 350.

"It's OK to cry. We have Kleenex in the pews for you today," the Rev. David A. Worth said at Malibu Presbyterian Church. "To those of you who lost homes our hearts go out to you. If you're going through a crisis let's talk it out."

The fire killed three people, including British director and screenwriter Duncan Gibbins, who was remembered Saturday night.

The 41-year-old Gibbins died of burns he suffered trying to rescue his cat.

"He was an ordinary guy with an acerbic wit," said Geoffrey Brandt, Gibbins' agent and longtime friend.

Firefighters on Sunday patrolled for embers and smoldering brush. Crews still worked on containment lines around the 19,000-acre burn area in the Santa Monica Mountains, said Los Angeles County fire Inspector Dan Ertel.

The force of 5,400 firefighters was slowly being disassembled, he said.

A few blocks from the firefighters' staging area in the Civic Center, an early morning

When I go home now I look at my house and I don't see landscaping — I see fuel. — Blinn, Malibu Presbyterian Church elder

Mass drew parishioners to Our Lady of Malibu Roman Catholic Church, where fire scorched earth within a few hundred yards.

Piles of donated goods ranging from beds to bicycles lay on church grounds under a sign saying, "Fire Victims Help Yourself."

"There's mourning and celebrating. There is grieving and thanking," Monsignor John Sheridan said after Mass as people lingered in a damp chill, talking over steaming cups of coffee, exchanging stories and lessons learned.

Sheridan noted how one of the classic symbols of the Malibu beach lifestyle contributed to the fire's intensity.

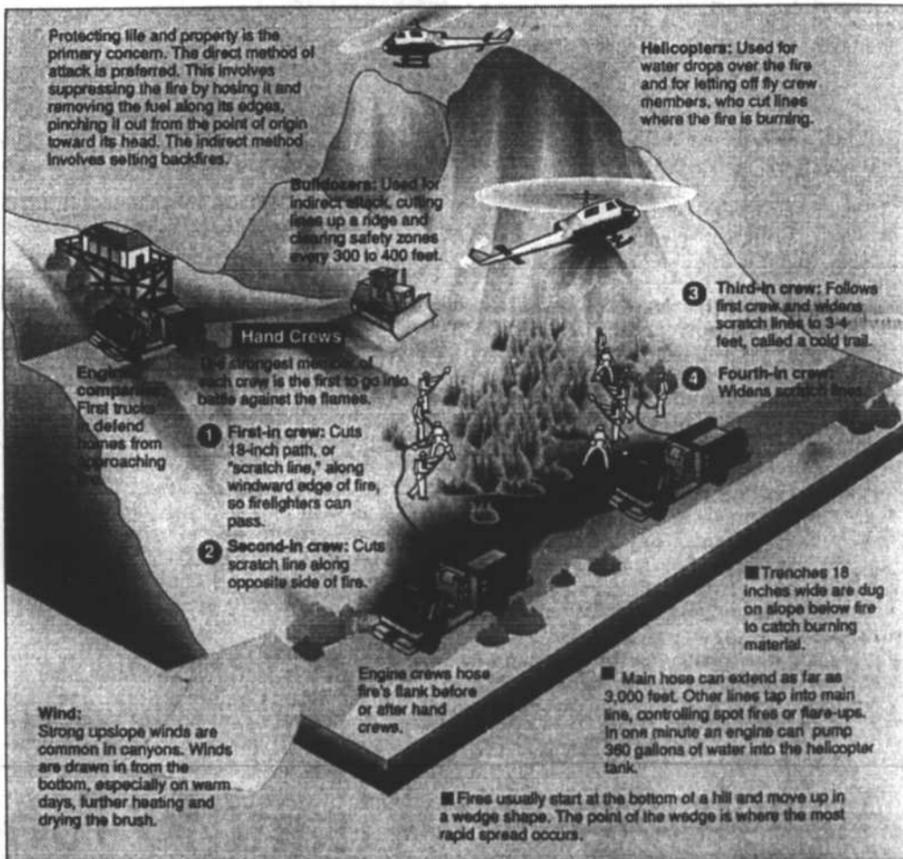
"Palm trees became torches. They are like burning devils," he said.

Steve Blinn, an elder at Malibu Presbyterian whose home is far up the coast from the fire area, gained similar insight.

"When I go home now I look at my house and I don't see landscaping — I see fuel," he said.

Fighting Wildfires

How firefighters have been attacking the latest round of fires in Southern California.



Reaction

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He said Smith brought a wealth of knowledge and familiarity to the position that would help the NU system tackle its future objectives.

"In his background there is experience with all the missions represented in our four campuses," Spanier said.

Keith Benes, president of the Association of Students of the University of Nebraska and UNL's student regent, said he was satisfied with the

board's selection. However, Benes said, he and other student regents were most impressed with how much clout they were given in the selection process.

"From the first day, all regents were not only willing, but made extended efforts to engage the student regents for input," Benes said. "I think we, as students, have gotten our say in this process."

Benes said although his working relationship with Smith would be short, he hoped to get to know the incoming president as soon as possible.

and report them. Scott Bunz, president of the Interfraternity Council, also spoke at the press conference. He said the greek system had made progress with hazing.

"In the old days it was very prevalent," he said. "We have made strides."

Bunz said that the night of Knoll's fall, fraternity presidents were meeting to discuss hazing.

National Phi Gamma Delta representatives will meet Monday with Griesen and Jayne Wade Anderson, UNL director of greek affairs, to discuss the incident.

Senior Reporter Steve Smith contributed to this report.

President

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"I absolutely wasn't surprised," she said. "Seated presidents take a risk. They have their own methods. It's important they are able to withdraw."

In a telephone conference call from California Sunday, Smith said he was pleased to accept the job at one of the top universities in the country.

"I think it's an exciting challenge," he said.

Smith said he was impressed with the chancellors, regents and faculty he met during his visit to Nebraska last Wednesday.

Smith, who was raised in Frankfort, Ind., has been in his current job since 1990. Smith took his first administrative role — dean of the School of Biological Sciences at UC-Irvine — in 1987. He served on the Purdue University faculty from 1969 to 1987.

Smith's only experience as a chief operating officer of a campus was in 1992-1993, when he was the acting chancellor of UC-Irvine for about nine months. Smith said he was not concerned about becoming the president of a four-campus system.

"I don't think I'll have problems,"

he said. Smith said team playing was crucial in a multicampus system. If the best people are hired on each campus, he said, the university will move forward without strict guidance from central administration.

"I don't propose to micromanage," he said.

While at UC-Irvine, Smith said he worked with state legislators but not the governor. During future visits to Nebraska, Smith said he would begin to work with state political leaders.

Regent Charles Wilson of Lincoln said Smith would bring a solid academic background and extensive land grant university experience to Nebraska.

Smith's Midwestern background will help him at Nebraska, Wilson said. His two-hour interview with regents last week also impressed Wilson.

"I think his ability to interact with the board was an important strength," he said.

Regent Robert Allen of Hastings said he was pleased with all four candidates recommended to the board.

"I frankly would have been happy with any one of the four," he said. "But I'm happy Dr. Smith was chosen."

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