

Fitzsimmons Denies Teamsters Gave Nixon

By PHILIP SHABECOFF
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WASHINGTON, Nov. 21 — Frank E. Fitzsimmons, president of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, denied today that his union had made surreptitious donations to President Nixon's 1972 campaign and said that his predecessor, James R. Hoffa, was a "damn liar" if he said otherwise.

An article in the current Newsweek quoted Hoffa as saying that he had been told that the teamsters gave \$60,000 to \$70,000 to the Nixon campaign instead of the reported \$18,000.

At a news conference at teamster headquarters here, Mr. Fitzsimmons said that Hoffa, who was released from Lewisburg Prison two years ago, "has no way of knowing" what the union does. Mr. Fitzsimmons asserted that all the money given to the campaign was on the record. He said he had also made a personal contribution of \$4,000.

However, Mr. Fitzsimmons disclosed that he had recently been questioned about campaign finances by three lawyers for the Senate Watergate committee.

At the same news conference, Mr. Fitzsimmons also said that the union would honor all its contracts with California growers, including 30 he had specifically repudiated in writing.

May Demand New Pact

In a wide-ranging question and answer session, Mr. Fitzsimmons also said that his 2.2-million-member union might have to demand a renegotiation of its trucking industry contract, signed earlier this year, if the fuel shortage reduced the earnings of drivers.

On several occasions in the last year Hoffa has told reporters that he had information that the teamsters acted as a conduit for large amounts of cash to President Nixon's reelection campaign. Hoffa reportedly mentioned sums as high as \$300,000. Some of this money, according to Hoffa's statements to reporters, came from Las Vegas interests, presumably gambling interests.

A lawyer for Common Cause disclosed today that the public interest lobby might subpoena Hoffa to tell his story on teamster financial activities during the campaign in connection with its suit against the Finance Committee to Re-elect the President.

Sees 'Glory' for Nixon

However, Mr. Fitzsimmons denied Hoffa's allegations today and, in his first sharp public attack on his former boss, said that "if he says he knows more about money than is on the record then he is a damn liar."

Mr. Fitzsimmons, who has been one of Mr. Nixon's strongest supporters in organized labor, reaffirmed his faith in the President today, saying, "I think he's been the most influential President this country has ever had and I'm sure that he will end his term in the glory that he deserves."



United Press International
Frank E. Fitzsimmons, president of teamsters union, at news conference in Washington yesterday.

Unreported Gifts

Most of the other labor leaders who endorsed President Nixon last year voted during the recent convention of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations to demand his resignation or impeachment.

Hoffa says he plans to run against Mr. Fitzsimmons in 1976 to regain the presidency

of the teamsters union. However, under the terms of the commutation of his 13-year

sentence for jury tampering fraud involving pension funds, Hoffa, who is now 60 years old, is barred from union activities until 1980. Unless the restrictions were removed by President Nixon, Mr. Fitzsimmons would not have to face a challenge from Hoffa.

Dispute With Chavez

Referring to his relationship with Hoffa, Mr. Fitzsimmons said, "Reports that we are close and friendly and in constant contact are not true."

At the news conference, Mr. Fitzsimmons confirmed reports that his union will keep its contracts to represent grape and lettuce workers in California rather than give up jurisdiction over those workers to the United Farm Workers Union, led by Cesar Chavez.

He said that it was untrue that he had reached an agreement with George Meany, president of the A.F.L.-C.I.O., to leave the fields to Mr. Chavez. Such an agreement, he asserted, was always contingent of the assumption by Mr. Meany or Mr. Chavez of all legal lia-

bilities in the event lawsuits were brought by the growers.

A spokesman for Mr. Meany said that Mr. Fitzsimmons' contention was "a misstatement" and that there had in fact been an agreement.

Meany Assailed

In a prepared statement, Mr. Fitzsimmons charged Mr. Meany—who, he said, "poses as the head of the American labor movement"—with treating the nation's farm workers as "a property to be exchanged back and forth between unions, sort of a chattel for exchange in a struggle of union politics."

He declared that the teamsters would strictly enforce all contracts with the grape and lettuce growers of California, including 30 contracts with grape growers in the Delano region that he repudiated in writing last summer.

The teamsters signed contracts with grape workers earlier this year after the growers declined to renew their contract with the United Farm Workers. Earlier the teamsters had signed agreements to represent lettuce workers, the first time the union ever signed con-

tracts to represent field workers.

Last week, Mr. Meany released what he said was the text of a tentative agreement with Mr. Fitzsimmons under which the teamsters would immediately give up their grape contracts and would not renew lettuce contracts after they expired.

Mr. Fitzsimmons did leave the door open to a resumption of negotiations on the jurisdictional dispute at some unspecified time in the future.

Turning to the fuel shortage, Mr. Fitzsimmons said that the union was conducting road tests to determine how it would affect his rank and file. He noted that over-the-road drivers, who are paid by the mile, average 450 to 500 miles a day under current speed limits. A reduction of the maximum speed to 50 miles an hour could reduce the average run to as little as 300 miles a day, he said.

The resulting loss in earnings would have to be made up, he said.