

The decision of former President Nixon to make his return to public life last week by participating in a golf tournament at the resplendent La Costa Country Club in California seemed deliberately designed to raise anew all the unanswered questions about his relations with Frank E. Fitzsimmons and the scandal-stained International Brotherhood of Teamsters.

In his ghostwritten autobiography, issued after his disappearance ten weeks ago, James R. Hoffa accused Mr. Fitzsimmons, his successor as teamster president, of having conspired with key Nixon aides to get him out of prison in 1971 under conditions that would keep him from recapturing the Presidency before 1980. The alleged deal was itself the outgrowth of a strange love affair between the teamsters and Mr. Nixon, which made the two-million-member truck union the backbone of his labor constituency and also prompted Mr. Hoffa to step down in favor of Mr. Fitzsimmons before being released from his penitentiary cell.

La Costa itself is emblematic of the ties that have long made law-enforcement officials worry about the links between the teamsters and organized crime. Much of the resort's financing comes from the \$1.4-billion Teamsters' Central States pension fund, and underworld figures are prominent among its owners and habitués. One of the cases that resulted in the jailing of Mr. Hoffa involved looting of the huge pension fund. Federal investigators are busily engaged right now in trying to determine whether the fund is still being treated as a grab bag. A good many of those under surveillance were playing in the tournament, companions of the former President. Thus the clumsiness of Mr. Nixon's return to the public eye may inadvertently have performed a useful service by putting a spotlight on the seamy relationship between the teamsters and their mobster associates.