

12-9-72
NYT

Teamsters Union Plans to Shift To Law Firm With Tie to Nixon

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Dec. 8—The teamsters union plans to transfer its legal business from a law firm identified with the Democrats to one that is soon to be joined by one of President Nixon's leading political advisers.

The union plans to drop Williams, Connolly & Califano, whose leading members include Edward Bennett Williams, the well known criminal lawyer, and Joseph A. Califano Jr., former counsel to the Democratic National Committee.

It will be represented instead by Morin, Dickstein, Shapiro & Galligan, a firm to which Charles W. Colson, who is now a special counsel to the President, is expected to move early next year.

The change, involving legal fees that union sources put at about \$100,000 a year, was regarded by observers as further evidence of the close political ties that have developed between the teamsters' union hierarchy and the Nixon White House.

Frank E. Fitzsimmons, president of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, is one of Mr. Nixon's principal labor supporters. He remained on the Pay Board, for example, when other union leaders resigned in protest against Administration economic policies.

Mr. Colson has served as the President's liaison with labor.

Last year he proposed that the President commute the prison sentence of James R. Hoffa, the former teamsters' chief, who was convicted of jury tampering and pension

fund fraud. Hoffa was subsequently released.

Williams, Connolly & Califano, a Washington firm, represents the Democrats in a civil suit that the party filed against leading Republican figures in connection with the break-in and bugging of the Democratic National headquarters last June in the Watergate complex here.

Mr. Williams and Mr. Califano took part personally in pressing the Democrats' suit, which is still pending. This is thought to have angered Mr. Fitzsimmons, and some observers advanced it as a major reason for the union's shift in law firms. Other observers disagreed, but a union source acknowledged that Mr. Fitzsimmons was probably unhappy with the firm's pursuit of the case, which was embarrassing to the President during his reelection campaign.

"But I doubt it was the reason he [Mr. Fitzsimmons] made the move," the source said. "He developed a close relationship with Colson while he was at the White House, and it just made sense to have him as [the teamsters'] lawyer."

The union official also pointed out that the Williams firm had been retained originally while Hoffa was president of the teamsters' union and that a reason for the change might be a desire by Mr. Fitzsimmons to choose his own lawyer.

None of the sources disputed the political significance of the union's move. The timing of it raised a question since Mr. Colson is not expected to leave the White House until March 1.