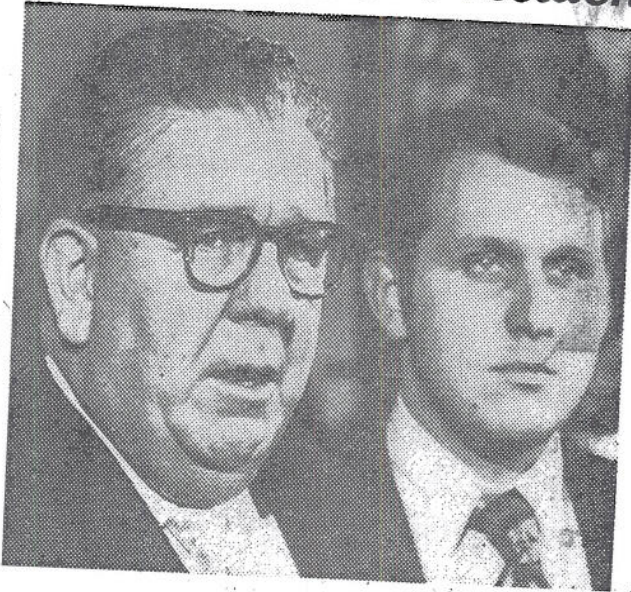


# Hoffa Is Stepping Aside As Teamsters' President



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Frank E. Fitzsimmons, left, acting head of teamsters union, with James B. Hoffa, son of jailed labor leader.

By PHILIP SHABECOFF JUN 4 1971

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WASHINGTON, June 3 — James R. Hoffa announced from prison today that he would not stand for re-election as president of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters.

In a letter to the general executive board of the 2-million-member union, the biggest in America, he said that he was stepping aside "because of my present legal problems" and would endorse Frank E. Fitzsimmons, acting chief of the union, as his successor.

According to sources close to

the union, a proposal will be made at the teamster's convention next month to create the post of president emeritus for Hoffa. The post would be an honorary position, without power.

Mr. Fitzsimmons, in a statement read to newsmen at the union's headquarters below Capitol Hill, announced that he would run for the presidency of the union.

He also said that the general

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executive board met this morning and voted unanimously to support his candidacy.

Hoffa is in the Federal penitentiary in Lewisburg, Pa., where he is serving an eight-year sentence for attempted jury fixing and five years more for pension fraud. He has served four of the 13 years.

His son, James B. Hoffa, stood at Mr. Fitzsimmons's side and spoke briefly to endorse the candidacy of his father's long-time lieutenant.

Mr. Fitzsimmons had maintained for some time that he would run for office only if Hoffa decided to step down as head of the union, which he has led since 1958.

Reading softly from a prepared statement, the gray-haired, somewhat portly Mr. Fitzsimmons said:

"I can tell you that Jimmy Hoffa has determined that he will not be a candidate for re-election. In withdrawing, Hoffa has endorsed my candidacy for the general presidency.

"It has been a difficult decision for Jimmy. He has been a teamster since his early teens. He has devoted a lifetime to the teamster movement, and the teamsters and his family have been his private interests."

Today's announcement ends many months of uncertainty over Hoffa's plans. There is no legal provision to prevent him from seeking re-election.

There had been some speculation that an effort would be made by the union rank and file to draft Hoffa. His public support today of Mr. Fitzsimmons may block any such movement.

The teamsters will elect a president at their convention in Miami Beach, which begins July 5. If Mr. Fitzsimmons replaces Hoffa, the way could be cleared for the teamsters to be readmitted to the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations. The union was expelled from the federation four years ago on corruption charges.

Sources close to the union said that Hoffa's decision to step down was based on advice that this was the only way he could get out of prison.

### Letter Is Quoted

He reportedly was supported in this decision by his family. His wife, Josephine, has been seriously ill for some time. A bid for parole was denied Hoffa in April.

In his letter to the executive board, the 58-year-old Hoffa

wrote "I feel because of my present legal problems I should not be a candidate for office at the July, 1971, convention since no one can say how my legal problems will finally be settled."

He also wrote:

"I know many thousands of members of this union have expressed their desire that I run for office, and I am very grateful for that expression; however, I feel that my expressed desire that you support Frank Fitzsimmons for general president is in your and their best interest for the future of all members and the international union."

The union's constitutional committee will reportedly recommend that the office of general vice president, created for Mr. Fitzsimmons, be abolished at the convention. According to the sources close to the teamsters, executive power in the union will become more decentralized.

In any case, they say, the teamsters under Mr. Fitzsimmons would not be ruled as they were under Hoffa—virtually as a feudal kingdom.

The contrast between the short, wisecracking, hyperactive Hoffa and the large, slow-speaking, affable Mr. Fitzsimmons is a striking one. Mr. Fitzsimmons, who is 63 years old, first met Hoffa about 35 years ago when both were members of Local 299 of the teamsters in Detroit.

### Unanswered Question

Mr. Fitzsimmons did not answer questions after his statement today. One question left open is whether Hoffa will resume his leadership of the Detroit local and of the Michigan Conference of Teamsters.

Hoffa was a controversial figure virtually from the moment he replaced Dave Beck as chief of the teamsters in 1958. His confrontations with Robert F. Kennedy when Mr. Kennedy was counsel to a Senate investigating committee and later Attorney General were explosive. Under Hoffa's leadership, some of the union's locals were allegedly influenced by organized crime.

Hoffa can file for a new hearing with the parole board on the basis of new evidence until June 30. Attorneys for the union are expected to file an appeal now that Hoffa has announced he will not run for re-election.

William Loeb, publisher of The Manchester (N. H.) Union Leader and a constant champion of Hoffa's pleas for release, visited Attorney General John N. Mitchell yesterday.