

Notes on People

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*Hoffa Links Jail Woes to Capital*

"In my opinion, they were trying to break my spirit," said James R. Hoffa, the former Teamsters Union president, charging that while serving a Federal prison term he was kept in maximum security for almost three years on orders from Washington.

Hoffa, who released last week when President Nixon commuted his 13-year prison term for jury-tampering and pension-fund fraud, served four years and nine months in the Federal penitentiary at Lewisburg, Pa.

He told The Detroit News: "I was in A Block building, which is the tightest security in the prison, in a cell by myself with an open front. I tried several times to get changed. Always their answer was the order came from Washington."

Hoffa attributed his alleged treatment, which he said was dehumanizing and demoralizing and designed to "see how far they could go" toward getting him to "blow my top," to persons left over in the Justice Department from the Kennedy Administration. The late Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy was particularly instrumental in putting the union leader behind bars.

In Washington, a spokesman for the Bureau of Prisons said wardens in all prisons have total authority over assignment of quarters for prisoners, and that Hoffa told officials at Lewisburg he preferred a cell to a dormitory. "It may well have been that the warden conferred with us," the spokesman said, but Hoffa's cell assignment "was primarily his decision."