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Hoffa Hopes for Eventual Role As a Leader of the Teamsters

MIAMI BEACH, Fla., Feb. 27 (UPI)—James R. Hoffa says he plans to get back into the labor movement and into a leadership position with the teamsters as soon as parole restrictions on his union activity expire.

In the meantime, Hoffa said during an interview in his apartment here, he will spend his time in the promotion of prison reform and in personal business ventures.

Hoffa, the former president of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, has talked freely with reporters since President Nixon let him out of prison in December on the condition that he stay out of union activities until 1980. But this is the first time he has said he wants to return to a position of power in the two-million-member teamsters' union, largest in the nation.

It is believed that, to Hoffa, this means the presidency of the union, a post he held for 14 years. He gave it up last June as a condition to getting the commutation that permitted him to win parole from sentences totaling 13 years for jury tampering and mail fraud.

A long-time protégé, Frank E. Fitzsimmons, ran the union as acting president when Hoffa went to prison in 1967, and was elected to a five-year term as president last July after Hoffa retired with a \$1.7-million lump-sum teamster pension.

The 59-year-old Hoffa would be 67 years old when the parole restrictions on his union activity expire in 1980, but he pointed out that his lawyers were seeking a court order to set aside his jury tampering conviction in Chattanooga. If they are successful, the limitations would be removed immediately, since he has already served enough time on the mail fraud conviction in Chicago.

'An Excellent Job'

Hoffa said that Mr. Fitzsimmons, 63, had done a good job as head of the teamsters and that reports that Hoffa might already be running the teamsters' union from behind the scenes were "just absolutely not

"The contracts have been excellent, the membership has increased, and he has done an excellent job," Hoffa said of his

successor. The two have been close colleagues since the 1930's.

Mr. Fitzsimmons, whose mild manner and taciturnity contrast sharply with Mr. Hoffa's ebullient nature, is not expected to seek re-election after his present term expires in 1976.

Mr. Hoffa apparently still enjoys wide support among rank-and-file teamsters, but many of the teamsters vice presidents are not anxious to have Mr. Hoffa back. They prefer the less centralized control exercised



United Press International
James R. Hoffa

by Mr. Fitzsimmons, which gives them more freedom in their own areas.

Mr. Hoffa renewed some old union acquaintances recently when the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations was holding its midwinter meeting at the Americana Hotel a few blocks from where Mr. Hoffa is living here with his ailing wife, Josephine.

He showed up twice in the Americana lobby, talking with reporters covering the council meeting and chatting with some members of the council and other union officials.

But the A.F.L.-C.I.O. president, George Meany, who led the move in 1957 that ousted the teamsters from the labor federation on corruption charges, refused to take note of Mr. Hoffa. Mr. Meany said last year that the teamsters would be welcomed back into the federation as soon as they got rid of Mr. Hoffa.

SF Examiner SF Examiner
After Parole Ends

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Hoffa Hopes for Old Job Back

MIAMI BEACH — (UPI) — Former Teamsters President James Hoffa says he would like to return to a position of power with his old union, once he is out from under the parole restrictions imposed on him after his four years in jail.

Before that time, he added, it is "just absolutely not true" that he is already running the nation's largest union from behind the scenes.

Interview

Hoffa was interviewed in the plush apartment where he has been living with his ailing wife Josephine since shortly after he was released from prison before Christmas on a commuta-

tion from President Nixon.

He has talked freely with reporters since his release, but this marked the first time the former truck driver indicated he wanted to return to a leadership position with the Teamsters. He did not specify what position, but Hoffa's career would make it unlikely he was considering anything but the presidency.

His parole was granted on the condition that he stay out of labor activities until 1980 — the year in which his prison sentence would have ended. He is now 59 and thus would be 67 when the restriction ends.

Court Move

But he said his lawyers are seeking a court order to set aside his jury tampering conviction in Chattanooga, Tenn. — a move which if successful would automatically lift the parole restrictions since he has already spent enough time in prison to serve out the other conviction he was jailed for, mail fraud conviction in Chicago.

Hoffa's long-time protege, Frank E. Fitzsimmons, was elected to a five-year term as president of the Teamsters last July, but is not expected to seek re-election when that expires in 1976. He is 63.

Hoffa apparently still enjoys wide support among rank and file Teamsters, although younger members in the union appear to be more skeptical of his claims to being railroaded into prison by the Kennedys.

Many of the Teamster vice presidents, however, are less anxious to have Hoffa back, preferring instead the less centralized control Fitzsimmons has been exercising.