

By William J. Eaton

LAKE ORION (Mich.) — (CDN) — Former Teamsters' Union President James R. Hoffa said he expected to return from Hanoi with one or more American prisoners of war before a "government foul-up torpedoed the trip.

Hoffa, interviewed at his summer home north of Detroit, said he is still ready to

go to North Vietnam if the State Department will restore his permit to travel there.

"I guess I got caught in the switches," Hoffa said, referring to the revocation of the travel clearance by Secretary of State William P. Rogers last Thursday about 24 hours after it was granted by lower level officials.

Hoffa, whose federal prison sentence was commuted last December by President Nixon, said he thought he had a green light from the White House to visit Hanoi as a private citizen.

"Somebody in the government apparently fouled up the situation," Hoffa concluded. He said a Detroit News story about his plans upset the North Vietnamese

in Paris, who had insisted on secrecy, an additional reason he cancelled the trip.

Taking a break from yard work at his lake front home, Hoffa also said.

● He would like to return to office in the Teamsters at the local level if the federal government lifts a ban on such union activity, now in

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effect until 1980 as a condition of his parole.

● He favors Nixon's reelection and is trying to get a legal ruling that would allow him to vote on Nov. 7, despite federal convictions for jury tampering and mail fraud.

#### Jane Fonda

Hoffa even had a kind word for Jane Fonda, the controversial actress who visited Hanoi recently, by saying that "no one could be against her if she brings one POW back because that's one more home."

His reaction to the presidential candidacy of Sen. George McGovern was: "Are you kidding?"

Hoffa elaborated on his aborted Hanoi trip in response to questions.

He scoffed at reports that he intended to negotiate with the Communist regime.

"I have nothing to offer them," he said. "They've got the prisoners. They either release them or they don't."

"I am of the opinion we would have been successful in getting one or more prisoners."

#### Wants Approval

Hoffa rejected any thought of going to North Vietnam without formal U. S. approval, although some lawyers believe such a trip would be legal under Supreme Court decisions.

"Absolutely not," Hoffa said. "Never mind what the lawyers say. Either I get an OK or I don't go."

Hoffa disputed a suggestion by Attorney General Richard Kleindienst that Hoffa's representative, William Taub of New York, proposed a deal that would allow Hoffa to seek union office in the Hanoi trip resulted in freeing any American prisoners.

#### Wants to Run

Hoffa said he never discussed any such proposal with Taub and Taub said he did not discuss it with the No. 2 man in the Justice Department, Ralph Erickson, when the Hanoi visit was brought to the department's attention.

But Hoffa said he wanted to get rid of the restriction that bars him from direct or indirect control over any labor union.

"I'd be a fool if I didn't," he said, adding that he might run for office in the Teamsters if he could.

"I think it would be locally," he said. Hoffa once was president of Teamsters Local 299 but resigned in an effort to win parole. The parole board turned down his request before Nixon granted executive clemency.

#### First Move

Another Detroit teamster, Frank Fitzsimmons, was elected to a five-year term in July, 1971, succeeding the then-jailed Hoffa.

At 59, Hoffa is graying at the temples but his chest muscles rippled on a stock frame as he shoveled away storm debris from the driveway.

He said he was first approached early last July on the POW trip by Taub.

Hoffa said he told Taub he would go "if I can do any good" and federal authorities approved of the idea.

The former Teamsters leader said he received a telegram from a North Vietnamese labor official, Nguyen Nun Vi, inviting him to make the trip.

A second communication from Hanoi, Hoffa said, signed by Hoang Que, said a visa could be picked up in Paris or the Laotian city of Vientiane.

In the meantime, Taub and Teamster Vice President Harold J. Gibbon conferred with White House adviser Henry A. Kissinger at San Clemente about the trip.

"From what Taub told me and what I read in the papers, they agreed it was a

good idea if I went as a private citizen" Hoffa said.

#### Best Wishes

While in Washington to pick up his passport, Hoffa said he saw Mrs. Elaine Crane, an aide to the Attorney General.

"She wished us Godspeed and said she was praying we'd bring back a prisoner," he added.

In New York, preparing to fly to Paris en route to Hanoi, Hoffa said he got a telephone call at 6 a.m. Thursday from Taub.

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See Murray Marder, Washington Post 9 Sep 72.