

Officials Chagrined By Hoffa's 'Lawyer' In P.O.W. Incident

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 11—Government officials were scratching their heads today over the exploits of William L. Taub, the mysterious "New York lawyer" who represented James R. Hoffa in his abortive effort last week to go to Hanoi to negotiate for the release of American prisoners.

Using Hoffa's name and allowing various high-ranking officials to believe that he was a lawyer, Mr. Taub, scheduled a meeting with the Attorney General, met with the Deputy Attorney General, saw Henry A. Kissinger, won a modification of Hoffa's probation conditions, persuaded the State Department to validate Hoffa's passport for travel to North Vietnam and got the North Vietnamese trade unions to invite the former president of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters to visit their country.

Today, these same officials learned that Mr. Taub was not a lawyer; that he once called himself "worldwide representative" for Pope Paul VI's film in-

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terests; that he had accepted a Los Angeles award as producer of the film "Z," only to have the film's French producer denounce him as an "impostor," and that the real producer, Eric Schlumberger had accused Mr. Taub of trying to sell him the M.G.M. building in Paris.

A check of the entertainment press revealed a record of incidents going back 20 years, in which Mr. Taub has been accused of representing himself without authority as a lawyer and agent for film and stage interests.

These included legal skirmishes a decade ago, when he attempted without authorization to sell rights to Charles Chaplain's films to television networks, and a successful suit 20 years ago by Margaret Sullivan, the actress, who said he had signed her up to perform in a "new" play that had in fact been produced before.

Officials Chagrined

The reaction in the Justice Department today appeared to be chagrin, rather than prosecutorial ire. John Hushen, the department's public information officer, said a check had been ordered on Mr. Taub in the Federal Bureau of Investigation's files, but that he was "not at liberty" to tell what had been discovered. He stressed that no F.B.I. investigation of Mr. Taub had been ordered.

A check today with officials who met with Mr. Taub revealed that all but one thought he was a lawyer, although none could remember that he specifically said he was one.

Ralph Erickson, the Deputy Attorney General, said that when they met, Mr. Taub said he "represented Mr. Hoffa, and when a lawyer is told that, he assumes he is talking with another lawyer."

Mrs. Elaine Crane, Mr. Erickson's assistant, said she had cautioned Mr. Taub that Justice

Department officials could talk to him only on a "lawyer to lawyer" basis.

On that basis, an appointment was arranged between Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst and Mr. Taub, who said he represented Hoffa in efforts to eliminate probation conditions that prevent him from returning to office as president of the teamsters' union. The conditions were imposed last December when President Nixon commuted Hoffa's sentence for jury tampering.

Erickson Saw Taub

When Mr. Kleindienst could not keep the appointment, Mr. Erickson saw Mr. Taub.

Mr. Taub and Mr. Gibbons also went to the summer White House in San Clemente, Calif., several weeks ago for a meeting with Mr. Kissinger, President Nixon's foreign policy adviser. A spokesman in Mr. Kissinger's office today said everyone there assumed that Mr. Taub was a lawyer, representing Hoffa.

Mr. Gibbons, reached at his office in St. Louis, said "it was never of an important New York my impression he was a mem-law firm" and that Mr. Taub had said nothing to change that impression.

Neither Hoffa nor Mr. Taub could be reached today, and there was no indication as to how Hoffa came to employ Mr. Taub to "represent" him. A Government source said Hoffa met Mr. Taub, who is described as a dark, "very persuasive" man in his early sixties, at a cocktail party, but the source did not know if Hoffa believed Mr. Taub to be a lawyer.

In his correspondence with Government officials, Mr. Taub used stationery that listed only his name on the letterhead. He gave his address as 118 East 60th Street, at Park Avenue, which is an expensive-appearing apartment building. The doorman there said today that Mr. Taub resided there.