

Haldeman Arranged Hoffa's Release

By Jack Anderson

H. R. Haldeman, the ousted White House major domo, personally pulled the strings that opened the prison doors for ex-Teamster boss Jimmy Hoffa.

The incarcerated Hoffa had been promised he would be free by Thanksgiving, 1970. This was considered so certain that his wife was permitted to telephone the happy news to him in the warden's office at Lewisburg, Pa., penitentiary.

But for a year, the Justice Department balked at recommending Hoffa's release, and the parole board turned him down twice. Not until ex-White House aide Murray Chotiner complained to Haldeman was action taken.

"It appears that nothing substantive has occurred," wrote Chotiner. "It is suggested that it should not take this long to perform if there is going to be any performance."

Chotiner's note to Haldeman was dated Nov. 3, 1971. By Christmas Eve, Hoffa was out of prison. His sentence was commuted by President Nixon after hundreds of thousands of dollars had been contributed to the Nixon campaign and after Hoffa pledged to "deliver" the Teamsters' Union into the Republican fold in 1972.

One source close to the Teamsters claimed the union had raised more than \$750,000 for Nixon, most of it in cash,

during the 1968 and 1972 campaigns. Much of the money came from Las Vegas gambling lords whose casinos were financed by the Teamsters' pension fund, swore our source.

Another source close to the President told us the amount was smaller. But all sources agreed that a huge cash collection was turned over to former Attorney General John Mitchell, in behalf of the Teamsters, by crime-connected Allen Dorfman. Mitchell flatly denied receiving any Teamsters contribution. "I was in the business of expending money, not receiving it," he told us.

Mafia Link

Dorfman has been linked by The New York Times to Mafia mobsters who allegedly have been trying to cut themselves into a Teamsters' medical program on the West Coast. The Times quoted from an FBI affidavit, which claimed Dorfman put Hoffa's successor, Teamsters president Frank Fitzsimmons, together with the Mafia mobsters in California last February.

After his meetings with the mobsters, Fitzsimmons flew back to Washington with President Nixon on the presidential plane. Dorfman, meanwhile, began serving a prison term for pension fund fraud and jury tampering.

We have spent several weeks piecing together the

story of Hoffa's release. Fitzsimmons made several approaches to Mitchell, beginning in mid-1969, to secure a parole for Hoffa. A promise of parole by Thanksgiving, 1970, however, fell through.

A confidential file shows that Hoffa's son, James, made a new approach in early 1971 to Murray Chotiner who was identified by the code name, "Mr. Pajamas." Contrary to published reports, Chotiner received no contributions or fees but assisted Hoffa for political reasons. On April 11, a Hoffa family friend, Charles O'Brien, spoke to Hoffa by telephone. A Teamsters associate, who also got on the phone, reported in a confidential memo:

"I told him that I passed on all information concerning himself to Mr. Pajamas who was putting same in the proper place so that the decision makers could make evaluations. . . (Hoffa) then told me that if he were out, not only could he deliver the Teamsters Union for the Republican Party in 1972 but that he could also deliver many construction trade unions as well. He told me that Mr. Fitzsimmons could not deliver anything without him."

Hoffa in Hair

The contact man in the Justice Department, thereafter, was Will Wilson, then chief of the Criminal Division. He told Chotiner on Aug. 10 that both

the President and Mitchell wanted "to get the Hoffa matter out of their hair."

Two days later, Wilson promised that "everything either has or will be done by Aug. 20 to assist in the release of Hoffa," but warned it was best "not to move too rapidly (to avoid) premature stories in the press."

Still nothing happened. On Oct. 7, young Hoffa appealed in a letter to Mitchell. The letter quoted Wilson as saying that Mitchell had personally approved an "understanding that the Justice Department would make a recommendation for immediate release on parole. I specifically asked him whether my understanding was with him alone or whether it was with you and the administration. He assured me that it was with you."

Chotiner subsequently sent Haldeman a chronological account of the efforts to free Hoffa, along with a note suggesting "it should not take this long to perform if there is going to be any performance."

Footnote: The confidential file indicates that Hoffa suspected Mitchell and Fitzsimmons of deliberately holding up his release. Chotiner refused to comment, saying he "does not discuss matters involving the White House."