

# Hoffa's Merry Men Are in a Legal Net

We shall now see whether James Hoffa and his merry men can again wriggle out of a legal net. Also, we shall see whether the Department of Justice really intends to enforce the provisions in the Taft-Hartley legislation dealing with labor unions' political activities.

Two locals of the Teamsters, together with six officials of the locals of the Teamsters, are involved.

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The individuals named in a 22-count indictment in St. Louis include Harold J. Gibbons, who has been prominently in the news because of his extensive appearances before the McClellan committee. He is a vice president of the national union as well as an officer of the local which generally directs the operations of the Teamsters in St. Louis. He is also administrative assistant to Hoffa.

Another official named is Sidney Zagri, legislative counsel for the international organization.

The law allegedly violated is Section 610 of Title 18 of the U.S. Code. It was included in the Taft-Hartley legislation. In substance, the law is an addition to legislation passed in 1907 forbidding contributions to campaigns for federal offices by corporations. The Taft-Hartley legislation put labor organizations under the same prohibition.

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The alleged beneficiaries of alleged contributions are Sens. Hennings and Morse, Reps. James Roosevelt of California, Henry Reuss of Wisconsin and two Missouri candidates for the House who failed of election. These contributions were made for primaries and elections in 1956.

Hennings, Morse, Roosevelt and Reuss have stated since the indictment that they presumed the contributions were from funds voluntarily subscribed by members of the unions.

It should be pointed out that unions quite generally collect voluntary contributions from members for political purposes. But the provisions of the law prohibit contributions from the general funds of

unions, which are made up of dues collected from all members.

In the indictment in St. Louis it is charged that the contributions "were derived substantially or entirely from the dues payments made by members" for the "general purposes" of the union.

This section of the law was invoked against the United Automobile Workers for something that happened in the 1954 campaign. An indictment was secured which the federal district judge in Michigan dismissed.

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When it was carried to the Supreme Court, the indictment was reinstated and Mr. Justice Frankfurter delivered a lengthy opinion concerning the history of the legislation and its importance.

He said: "What is involved here is the integrity of the electoral process, and, not less, the responsibility of the individual citizen for the successful functioning of that process. This case thus raises issues not less than basic to a democratic society."

However, when the case was tried before the same judge who had dismissed the indictment, there was an acquittal. The Justice Department then seemed to regard the statute as a dead letter.

The facts in the Teamsters case seem much more substantial than in the UAW case. In that instance, what was involved was payment by the union for a radio broadcast on which a candidate appeared. There was no direct monetary contribution involved. In the present case the alleged facts go straight to the heart of the matter.

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The question is whether a union member's money which he contributes as dues for the general purposes of the union can be used to support political candidates whom he may or may not favor. In short, the alleged offense is the injustice of using money contributed for another purpose to support a candidate repugnant to the contributor, and without his express permission.