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## The Historical Background

The "Team Drivers International Union" \* was chartered by the American Federation of Labor (AFL) in 1899 to organize drivers of horse-pulled vehicles. Its early years were marked by extreme factionalism and secession. A rival union was set up in 1902 as a result of conflicts over dues, officers, and membership policies. The following year, with unity reached, Cornelius P. Shea of Boston was elected president and headquarters were established in Indianapolis, where they remained until 1953. The name of the newly combined organization was changed to the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT). Later, the words "Chauffeurs, Warehousemen, and Helpers of America" were appended; the old-time team driver is now extinct.

In 1907 a young Bostonian, Daniel J. Tobin, was chosen president of the IBT, which then possessed fewer than 40,000 members and an almost empty treasury. Another group of dissidents had just broken away, as was to happen again in 1909. Tobin soon brought most factions back into the fold. By his frugality and policy of keeping hands off local affairs, he forestalled further disruption and increased the size of the treasury. When he finally gave up the presidency in 1952, he left an organization which had become the major power in the AFL, with a net worth of \$30 million (presently \$45 million) and a

\* American unions traditionally include the word "International" in their title because they are empowered to organize in Canada as well as the United States.

membership exceeding 1 million (presently 1.6 million), and a composition completely changed from the original union of horse-team drivers.\*

#### CRAFT JURISDICTION

This revolution in size and occupational composition had not yet taken place when Hoffa joined the union in 1932. Then, as for the preceding fifteen years, the Teamsters had only about 80,000 members. Many were using power- (rather than horse-) driven vehicles, but the membership was still primarily coal, ice, milk, and bread drivers—the specialized delivery “crafts” as they proudly called themselves.

General local cartage was only sporadically unionized. Warehousemen, who at present comprise a fourth of the membership, were not formally included, nor were a multitude of related production workers whom Tobin called “rubbish” and considered outside Teamster jurisdiction. Tobin did not desire to include the newly emerging highway drivers,\*\* a group which

\* The average annual membership in the International Brotherhood of Teamsters is shown below. These are IBT figures.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Members</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Members</i>
1903	32,000	1936	170,000
1906	38,000	1939	420,000
1909	32,000	1942	590,000
1912	42,000	1945	600,000
1915	52,000	1948	920,000
1918	74,000	1951	1,100,000
1921	83,000	1954	1,200,000
1924	76,000	1957	1,400,000
1927	88,000	1960	1,500,000
1930	86,000	1963	1,500,000
1933	75,000	1965	1,600,000

\*\* Highway, over-the-road, or intercity trucking should be distinguished from local cartage activities—platform loaders and pickup-and-delivery men who remain in a single town. Through custom and contractual arrangements, different workers and often different companies are involved. Today, these two operations taken together constitute the Teamsters' freight division, which contains over 450,000 workers, or 30 per cent of the membership.

currently dominates the Teamsters and through which James R. Hoffa rose to power.

In keeping with his emphasis on craft unionism, Tobin strongly supported the AFL when John L. Lewis led a large contingent out of the federation in the mid-thirties to form the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). Lewis and the CIO argued that all workers in a single industry should be organized into one union, regardless of skill, while Tobin and the AFL stood for the traditional practice of separating workers according to occupation. In the following fifteen years, Tobin, together with William Green and David Dubinsky, became one of the three most influential men in the AFL. He also served as chief labor consultant to the Democratic Party under Franklin Roosevelt.

As a result of the labor split, the Teamsters continually raided and were raided by CIO affiliates which were trying to keep the truck drivers and warehousemen in the same union as all other workers of a given industry. Some of the bitterest jurisdictional battles occurred on Hoffa's home grounds in Detroit, where he successfully fought to hold his membership.

Teamster adherence to the craft principle was defeated from within, ironically enough, not by external attack. In contrast to Tobin's limited ambitions for his union, certain other leaders—notably old-timer Dave Beck and young Jimmy Hoffa—were anxious to expand the Teamster jurisdiction. This issue served as a source of great conflict within the union, with Beck and Hoffa eventually victorious. Today, the IBT boasts truck drivers as its nucleus, but it also includes organized workers from a wide variety of other occupations and industries. In this way the Teamsters have become the largest union in the country, the bargaining representative for one out of every ten organized workers.

## LOCAL AUTONOMY

Under Tobin, power was centered in the local unions. The local commanded jurisdiction over its craft within a single city, governed itself, and negotiated its contracts. If the local leaders paid their per capita tax (40 cents monthly for each member) to the International and had their own affairs under control, Tobin confined himself to pouring forth paternalistic advice in the International's monthly magazine. Where local leadership was weak or irresponsible, however, he denied strike benefits and on occasion even suspended charters. When secession or factionalism threatened, he appointed an International trustee to administer the local's affairs, sometimes for several years. Otherwise, he made no attempt to centralize authority.

When several Teamster locals existed in the same locality, they banded together into a Joint Council for solving organizational, jurisdictional, and political problems—as they still do today. Tobin discouraged the growth of other intermediary bodies, fearing competition for the International and himself. Nevertheless, by the 1940's a few states had established their own Conferences, designed to accomplish on a broader scale what the Joint Councils did on the city level. Probably the most significant element in the centralization of union activities was the informal development of strong regional leaders, especially Beck in the West and Hoffa in the Central States. As early as 1937 Beck had organized an eleven-state Western Conference, and in 1953, shortly after becoming Teamster president, he set up Conferences for the rest of the country as well. However, the major trade union function—negotiating and administering the collective agreement—continued to reside largely in the local until Hoffa gradually assumed control.

In contrast to his two predecessors, Hoffa has centralized collective bargaining power wherever he has moved. As negotiating chairman of the Central States Drivers Council (CSDC), he has bargained for all Midwestern highway drivers since 1940. This was the first, and for many years the only, example of area-

wide bargaining in the Teamsters. More recently, as president of the IBT and negotiator for the entire truck freight industry, he has shifted the locus of authority away from local or regional bodies, and toward the International.

## THE QUESTION OF COMMUNISM

Tobin feared Communist penetration of the Teamsters. In 1935 he pushed through an amendment to the union's constitution barring Communists from membership. A group of Marxist leaders, Farrell Dobbs and the Dunne brothers, had, however, secured control of the Minneapolis Teamsters and were attempting to spread their influence through the Midwest.\* At first (1935-1936), Tobin tried unsuccessfully to suppress them. Then he bided his time until 1941, when, in the most dramatic exception to his noninterventionist policy, he expelled them from the Teamsters and sent in local officials from all over the country (including Beck and Hoffa) to take control. The fight spilled over into Detroit when John L. Lewis tried to use this situation to gain a foothold for the CIO in the trucking industry. This danger came to an end though, when the CIO repudiated Lewis, and several of the Marxists were convicted of subversion in one of the country's most famous political trials.\*\*

On the West Coast, Beck pressed his own anti-Communist crusade, opposing Harry Bridges' International Longshoremen's Workers Union on these grounds. Hoffa's actions, on the other hand, sharply contrast with those of Tobin and Beck. Although he has professed a strong dislike of communism, he sympathized with the Minneapolis Marxists and was strongly influenced by them. As Teamster president he condemned Beck's attacks on Bridges and signed a mutual-assistance pact with the ILWU.

\* The Minneapolis leaders were pro-Trotsky and anti-Stalin. In contrast to many other American unions, Marxists favoring the Soviet Union have never possessed power in the Teamsters. We discuss the Trotskyite episode in Chapters 5 and 6.

\*\* *Dunne v. U.S.*, 138 F (2d) 137 (1943). This case is discussed in Chapter 6.

## THE BECK REGIME

Dave Beck, the number two man in the Teamsters in the thirties and forties, waited impatiently to replace Tobin as president. Our study of the extended correspondence between the two men indicates that Tobin almost always consulted Beck before making important decisions.

In 1948 Beck was appointed "executive vice-president," a specially-created post to appease his ambitions. But as his day of triumph finally approached late in 1952, Beck was in danger of being superseded by the young upstart from Detroit, Jimmy Hoffa. He anxiously pleaded for Hoffa's support; Hoffa pondered whether to run for the presidency himself, and decided to avoid a showdown with its possibility of defeat. Beck was aging and would soon retire, and Hoffa had other tasks to complete. Thus, a truce was reached whereby Hoffa threw his huge block of Midwestern and Southern votes to Beck, in return for Beck's promise not to interfere in Hoffa's activities.

A skilled administrator, Beck had always recoiled at the informal, haphazard way Tobin ran the union and dreamed of bringing greater efficiency to the job. To help accomplish this he brought with him the highly proficient Einar Mohn as executive vice-president and delegated much authority to him.

Beck quickly introduced what was then thought a major structural change—three area Conferences for the East, Midwest, and South, paralleling the one out West. He also promoted the National Trade Divisions (grouping locals along functional or industrial lines), which had been formally established four years earlier at his instigation. However, Beck's increasing involvement with his personal financial affairs and his declining power in the union meant that the Conferences and the National Trade Divisions were not to play the key role Beck had visualized for them, except in the West.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to his bureaucratic interests, Beck felt great concern over his reputation. He hired public relations consultants and toured both this country and Europe to establish himself

as a "labor statesman." He was proud of his position as trustee of the University of Washington and enjoyed addressing businessmen's groups.

In contrast to Tobin, Beck was a staunch Republican and a chief labor supporter of President Eisenhower. Beck also lacked Tobin's loyalty to the AFL; in 1953 he even contemplated establishing a third federation with David McDonald of the Steelworkers and John L. Lewis of the Mineworkers. This dream was smashed when the long-split American labor movement was patched together in 1955, and a seemingly united AFL-CIO was organized with George Meany as president and Walter Reuther of the Automobile Workers as *de facto* first vice-president. Lewis stayed out of the merged federation; McDonald, although disgruntled, remained in, as did the Teamsters. Beck's power was by this time considerably weakened. For, just as Beck largely dominated the International during Tobin's final years, so Hoffa had already assumed substantial control by the middle of Beck's much shorter reign.

## THE MCCLELLAN COMMITTEE

Beck's anxiety over his "image" made him an easy target for Senator John L. McClellan's chief counsel, the energetic young Robert Kennedy. In shame and confusion, Beck ran from the country in February, 1957, when he saw his carefully cultivated respectability shattered by Congressional investigations into the "vice and corruption" of his associates in the Pacific Northwest and into his own fiduciary irresponsibility. He returned one month later and took the Fifth Amendment during his appearance before the McClellan Committee in May.

Beck had become an empty hulk of a figure, disgraced though not yet convicted, and observers speculated on which day or week he would resign.\* The McClellan Committee, it seemed,

\* Beck was convicted later in 1957 of grand larceny for pocketing \$1900 from the sale of a union-owned automobile, a decision which was upheld by the Supreme Court in May, 1962. In 1959 he was convicted of filing incorrect income tax returns for himself and for the Teamsters Joint Council in Seattle. The latter was upheld when the Supreme Court refused to review his appeal.

was clearing Hoffa's way to the throne. But the spotlight was already shifting. The government's attack on Hoffa began in March, 1957, with his arrest for allegedly attempting to bribe a Congressional investigator. The attack still has not ended, but neither (thus far) has it prevented Hoffa from maintaining—and expanding—his power. The pursuit of Hoffa has drawn the previously little-known Teamster leader into national notoriety. Concomitantly, Hoffa's durable resistance has served as the whetstone upon which the Kennedy political instincts were sharpened and proved.

For over two years, between mid-1957 and mid-1959, the McClellan Committee concentrated its efforts upon Hoffa and the Teamsters, with Hoffa appearing as a frequent witness. No other individual has ever received such sustained grilling from a Congressional committee, and Hoffa's ability to withstand the onslaught documents his shrewd combative facilities. Unlike Beck and many other Teamster officials and associates, Hoffa has never taken the Fifth Amendment.

The McClellan Committee charges against Hoffa fell into two broad categories. The first involved allegations of financial malpractice, including the misuse of union funds and the acceptance of payoffs from employers; and second, the resort to undemocratic procedures, racketeering, and violence. For example, Hoffa had encouraged Teamster members to buy lots in Sun Valley, a land development-retirement community near Orlando, Florida. He had placed \$500,000 from the treasury of his home local, 299 of Detroit, in an Orlando bank, to induce the bank to grant a loan to the project's promoter, Henry Lower. When Lower diverted this loan to other uses, Sun Valley went bankrupt, the bank refused to return Local 299's money, and Robert Kennedy revealed that Hoffa owned a 45 per cent option on the property.

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in May, 1962. The former tax conviction was set aside on appeal in January, 1962 on grounds that some of the disputed income was embezzled from the union and embezzled funds are not taxable. The charges were later dismissed. In November, 1962, Beck was acquitted of a charge that he illegally accepted a \$200,000 loan from a trucking employer.

A more lucrative financial venture involved a truck-leasing company, Test Fleet, which was jointly owned by Hoffa's wife and the wife of his associate, Bert Brennan. Kennedy argued that the firm which leased these trucks did so as a payoff for Hoffa's cooperation in settling a Teamster strike several years before.

Hoffa was also accused of steering the union's health and welfare fund to an insurance company which was not the most favorable bidder. He forced this decision on his fellow trustees, Kennedy claimed, at a cost of over a million dollars to the fund, in order to help his friends and strengthen his underworld ties.

In other cases, Hoffa was charged with using hoodlums to extend his control. One such incident allegedly occurred in New York City in 1955-1956, when Hoffa induced Beck to charter seven new locals, said to be dominated by underworld elements, just in time for them to cast their votes for his preferred candidate in a close contest for the presidency of the city's Joint Council. Kennedy dubbed these groups "paper locals" because they had practically no members.

The McClellan Committee investigations precipitated two indictments against Hoffa during 1957-1958—the Congressional bribery case, and a wiretap conspiracy case, in which Hoffa was prosecuted for spying on his subordinates with illegal listening devices. Both ended in acquittal. In addition, he was indicted in November, 1960, for mail and wire fraud in connection with Sun Valley, an indictment which was eventually dropped.

The interest of the Justice Department in Hoffa intensified after John F. Kennedy became President and appointed his brother, Robert, Attorney General. In 1962, Hoffa stood trial for accepting illegal payments from an employer in the Test Fleet case. The jurors split 7 to 5 in Hoffa's favor, thereby enabling him to avoid conviction, but this merely set the stage for another indictment, in which Hoffa and several associates were charged with jury tampering; in March, 1964, he was convicted and sentenced to eight years in prison. Four months later he was convicted and sentenced to five years in jail for mail and

wire fraud growing out of his activities as trustee of the Teamsters' \$300-million Central and Southern States Pension Fund and his long involvement with Sun Valley (Part IV). His extensive appeals, while he is free on bail, will last until at least 1966.

The McClellan Committee investigations held implications for the Teamsters as a union, as well as for Hoffa personally. Based on a detailed report by the AFL-CIO's Ethical Practices Committee, which accepted all the unfavorable Congressional findings, the labor federation voted in December, 1957, to expel the Teamsters. Recalling Tobin's loyal support of the AFL, veteran Teamster officials smarted with outrage and declared they were being used as scapegoats to prevent anti-labor legislation and investigations of other unions. But Meany insisted that the IBT, with Hoffa as leader, was not acceptable to the federation.

#### HOFFA'S FORMAL ASSUMPTION OF POWER

In October, 1957, in the midst of his legal difficulties and the expulsion proceedings, Hoffa was elected IBT president. Unlike most union elections, the outcome was uncertain until the very end, for Hoffa faced stormy opposition from Convention delegates anxious to find a less controversial leader. Crucial to his final success was the support of Einar Mohn, who influenced many Western votes; Hoffa rewarded Mohn with the directorship of the Western Conference.

All was not yet smooth sailing. Charging that the Convention delegates had not been selected in accord with the Teamster Constitution, a group of 13 dissident rank and filers challenged Hoffa's right to assume office. In a compromise settlement, he reluctantly agreed to accept the advice of a court-appointed Board of Monitors, and the lesser title of "Provisional President."

It soon became apparent that Hoffa had swallowed more than he realized. He had expected the Monitorship to last only one year; instead, it lasted three and a half. He had also expected only mild and friendly suggestions from the Monitors; instead,

after a brief honeymoon period, they began to issue "Orders of Recommendation" and to investigate member complaints. The Monitors criticized Hoffa for his failure to remove inept and dishonest local leaders in cities such as New York—where the impetus for the monitorship had originated, Chicago—where a group of dissatisfied members eventually seceded from the Teamsters, and Philadelphia—whose largest local almost bolted to the AFL-CIO in 1963 (Chap. 13). They decided it was necessary to remove Hoffa first, and from mid-1959 to mid-1960 it appeared that they might succeed.

Finally, in March, 1961, after involved legal hassles, Hoffa secured a court order to hold another election, which would dissolve the Board of Monitors. At the ensuing Convention, in July, 1961, Hoffa assumed the coveted title formerly held by Tobin and Beck; he became general president of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters.