

# BUSINESS

## Teamsters' crime watchdog quits, hints union is corrupt

■ Hoffa appointee says 'organized crime again threatens union'

By JOSEPH SZCZESNY  
Press Automotive Editor

The outsider brought in to keep the International Brotherhood of Teamsters free of corruption has abruptly quit.

In his letter of resignation, Edwin Stier, the head of the Teamsters internal anti-corruption initiative, said he was concerned that organized crime continues to undermine the union.

"Based upon Jim Hoffa's reaction to our report, in which

we have made it clear that we have substantial reliable information that organized crime again threatens the union, I have become convinced that my continued efforts and those of our investigators to create an anti-corruption program for the Teamsters Union would be futile," Stier said in his resignation letter.

Hoffa had appointed Stier with great fanfare soon after taking office to fulfill a campaign pledge to keep the union mob free. The Teamsters president has noted that his own father, the legendary James R. Hoffa, was murdered by mobsters after being kidnapped outside a restaurant in Bloomfield Township.

Stier did produce a long, detailed report that laid out the organized crime's infiltration of the union, which still operates under a 15-year-old consent agreement that opened the union's internal processes to outside scrutiny. The consent decree paved the way for the removal of hundreds of Teamsters officials tainted by corruption and the direct election of the union's president.

Hoffa, while promising to fight corruption, also has campaigned to get rid of the policing mechanism included in the consent decree, which is still administered by the U.S. Department of Justice.

Stier's resignation as an

independent corruption fighter is considered a setback to the union's efforts to end the consent decree.

Nevertheless, union officials defended the decision and suggested one major issue was the ongoing cost of the Stier's investigation.

Patrick Szymanski, Teamsters general counsel, said the information developed by Stier had been turned over to federal authorities.

The Teamsters had spent \$15 million on the program, of which about \$8 million went to Stier's law firm over the past five years, Szymanski said. "We didn't hide anything. I



Hoffa

Hoffa had appointed (Edwin) Stier with great fanfare soon after taking office to fulfill a campaign pledge to keep the union mob free.

PLEASE SEE UNION/B-9

# UNION

FROM PAGE B-8

## Worker in charge of anti-crime unit in Teamsters quits

think Ed had lost perspective. He thought he was an independent counsel.

"We're still serious about what we're doing within the organization. It's just have a dispute with Ed over the way he went about," added Szymanski, who said Stier did not seem to appreciate the need for confidentiality.

"There's a balance to be struck here about spending millions and millions of dollars to investigate every little allegation that anybody raises," Szymanski said. "There

are always people that have political axes to grind, who have their own political agendas to pursue."

The union's executive board also appears to have concluded that any effort to end the consent decree would be held in abeyance until at least after the 2004 presidential election in November and decided to cut its losses. The union has endorsed Democrat John Kerry.

Ken Paff, the chief organizer for Teamsters For A Democratic Union, said the union had already spent more on Stier's investigations than on organizing or strikes. Nonetheless, Stier's departure is an embarrassment and at odds with his promises to keep the union free of corruption.

(Press wire services also contributed to this report.)