



UNITED STEELWORKERS, LOCAL 1-1937

Affiliated with AFL-CIO-CLC

SERVING MEMBERS THROUGHOUT COASTAL BRITISH COLUMBIA



September 20, 2021

Desperate District 3 Director Files Lawsuit in Attempt to Silence Critics

I am obligated to report to the membership that on August 10th of this year, the current Director of USW District 3, Steve Hunt, took the unprecedented and unwarranted action of filing a lawsuit against 11 USW Local Union Presidents and the USW Wood Council Chairperson alleging a breach of confidentiality and defamation over a July 9, 2021 letter which was sent only to the International Officers.

The Wood Council Chair and the 11 Local Union Presidents, in their elected capacities, sent the letter to the USW International President Tom Conway, International Vice Presidents Fred Redmond, David McCall, Roxanne Brown, Leanne Foster and Secretary-Treasurer John Shinn, requesting a meeting to discuss their concerns with the Director.

This internal letter contains only truthful statements or honestly held beliefs about the District 3 Director, whose actions noted (and not-noted) in the letter were, in the view of the signatories, detrimental to the interests of their memberships. The letter was not defamatory, malicious, nor did it breach any confidentiality.

The letter also requested the International President not include the District 3 Director on a slate of candidates he was considering for the upcoming international elections, as it was believed by the Local Union Presidents and Wood Council Chair to be unfair to any potential challenger for the Director position. The signatories to the letter know there is precedent for the International Officers to not include a District Director on such a slate.

The Wood Council Chair and the Local Union Presidents named as defendants, unanimously and vigorously denounce Mr. Hunt's lawsuit as an attempt to silence, through fear of reprisal, not only those named in his lawsuit but also any USW member who wants to challenge his candidacy and actions.

Mr. Hunt, through his attorney, offered not to sue, if the signatories to the July 9 letter agreed not to, "*Purport to speak about Steve Hunt on behalf of your Local Union without explicit written authority.*"

This clearly demonstrates his lawsuit is intended to silence opposition to his re-election by trying to send a democratic chill through the District.

The international election process is underway; nominations take place in September 2021 and the election is November 23, 2021. The Wood Council Chair and the Local Union Presidents named in the lawsuit will not be bullied into silence but will continue to speak truthfully and express fair political comment. We will make our memberships aware of the Director's actions throughout the election process and we urge members to fully participate and not fear Mr. Hunt's reprisals.

Legal Counsel for the Local Union Presidents and Wood Council Chair has advised that the lawsuit is very unlikely to succeed as the statements in the letter are either true, reasonably held beliefs or fair comment and are protected by qualified privilege.

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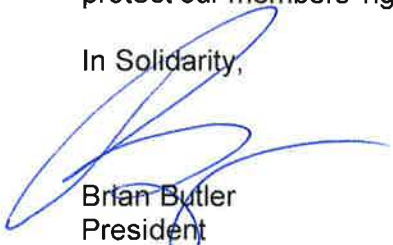
RE: Desperate District 3 Director Files Lawsuit in Attempt to Silence Critics

It is an extremely sad day for the labour movement when a Union leader disregards the Union's internal dispute process and chooses instead to attack his brothers and sister in court, simply because they sought a meeting to raise concerns with the International Officers about their election slate and the Director's conduct during his term.

It is unfortunate Mr. Hunt is now suggesting his attempt to silence his critics through a lawsuit is necessary, by portraying himself as a victim and using the lawsuit as a campaign tool. He is now circulating widely the very letter he says defames him in an attempt to divide the District, in the hope of being re-elected. This divisive tactic will not only damage the Union, it will help no one; not even Mr. Hunt.

More than ever, the 11 Local Union Presidents and the Wood Council Chair who have been falsely accused in Steve Hunt's bizarre lawsuit will continue to defend their right to raise concerns within the Union and to protect our members' right to support whomever they wish in the international election, without fear of reprisal.

In Solidarity,



Brian Butler
President
United Steelworkers
Local 1-1937

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