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Mr. James Hoffa
President
International Brotherhood of Teamsters
25 Louisiana Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20001

July 17, 2008

Dear President Hoffa

Your recent action placing Local 714 in a politically motivated trusteeship represents a cowardly abdication of leadership, a betrayal of basic union democracy and of long-time supporters. This ill-advised move effectively overturns the votes of the membership for Local 714 leaders, including myself, who were elected repeatedly. Instead of fighting to protect union democracy, you helped further the Independent Review Board (IRB) vendetta against the Hogan family by imposing an “emergency” trusteeship on a local that was – according to your own representative and general counsel – cooperating closely with the International Union about issues raised by the IRB.

It is clear to the membership of the Local 714 and the dedicated former officers, that the trusteeship was imposed so that I would not be able to resume my duties as leader of the local, following a six month suspension. As you know, your legal representative previously informed the IRB that my six-month suspension was enough punishment for my not punishing free speech by Local 714 organizing director Bob Riley who had private conversations with my father William Hogan, his best friend of 55 years. When you moved against Local 714, the IRB had not yet rendered a decision on whether to punish me further, following their hearing (at a non-union hotel that our local had previously picketed.) There was no reason, moral, legal or otherwise to prevent me from coming back to serve those who elected me four times.

Your transparent effort to justify a trusteeship on Local 714 by claiming “non-cooperation” with the international union by the local officers is contradicted by the actions and comments of the International Union. Among these:

--Twice, the international union delayed a hearing on a trusteeship because of the cooperation shown by the officials of Local 714.

--Prior to the imposition of the trusteeship, Brian Rainville, the embedded international monitor of Local 714, wrote a letter to IRB Administrator John Cronin detailing the good efforts of the Local to comply with IRB’s recommendations.

--Only a week before the trusteeship was imposed, your General Counsel Brad Raymond told the acting Local 714 Secretary Treasurer Mick Vendafreddo that Local 714 was doing a "great job." While Rainville and Raymond are now falling into line with your false justifications for the trusteeship, they can't take back their words, anymore than you can explain why the International Union twice delayed hearings on a trusteeship, only to impose an "emergency" takeover by the international union.

--As further evidence of cooperation, Local 714 gave up jurisdiction of its 600 member trade show and film production drivers unit to another local. Local 714 had built this unit from the ground up over decades and our efforts were justly praised locally as a model of cooperation that benefited both workers and their industries. Local 714 used the exact same work rules for film productions that are used across the country including Local 399 which represents Teamster drivers on Hollywood productions, but the IRB applied a double standard by insisting that Local 714 change the rules to weaken the influence of the Hogan family. The local did change its rules as the IRB demanded, and then in a painful concession agreed to the International Union's demand that the trade show and film production units be transferred to another local.

You know better than anyone that once the mob influence in the union was removed, a decade and a half ago, the IRB justified its continuing role by taking political sides within the union, using double standards and its draconian powers to expel members who were never charged with a crime or misconduct. When you first ran for President of the Teamster union, you emphatically stated that you would work to end the abusive power of the IRB, whose openly political agenda at the time was to target officials who ran for office on your slate. In 1996, the IRB demanded that the International Union -- then led by Roy Carey -- place in trusteeship three locals that were led by Teamster officials running on your slate. These leaders were my father Bill Hogan of Local 714 in Chicago, Tom Ryan of Local 107 in Philadelphia and T.C. Stone of Local 745 in Texas.

Imposing a trusteeship is a serious step that requires a serious justification, but the IRB never offered any compelling reason to overturn the democratic decision of the membership to elect their own leaders and be represented by these leaders -- any more than you offer now for the current ill advised trusteeship of Local 714. When my father Bill Hogan and other local elected officials were removed from office in 1996, the new trustee, imposed at the instigation of the IRB, held a well-publicized hearing where anyone from Local 714 could bring a complaint about the former leadership of the local. Out of the 12,000 members represented by Local 714 at the time, not a single complaint was brought to the hearing.

Nor, despite their best efforts, did the new trustee or the IRB manage to find any wrongdoing or misappropriation of funds in this well-run local. No charges were made against any officer of the local. The inept administration of the new IRB-imposed trustees, however, did prove a disaster for the members of Local 714. The local lost three thousand members under the appointed trustees which created a deficit of \$500,000, robbing the local of needed resources to represent the membership. Five units decertified from the local. We can only guess what damage may arise from your imposing a new administration unfamiliar with the history of the local, operating without the accumulated knowledge and experience of the officers who served this local.

When the IRB could not find evidence to charge anyone with wrongdoing and the local was finally returned to the members in 1998, the IRB looked for new avenues to target members of the Hogan family, especially my father, who had been elected President of Joint Council 25. In 2002, the IRB filed baseless, ludicrous charges that my father *intended* to negotiate a “substandard” labor agreement for temporary trade show workers whom he sought to organize into Local 631 at the request of your own representative Dane Passo.

You knew these charges were bogus – no agreement was ever reached with the trade show company, no contract was ever signed. You knew my father did not manage to double the size of Local 714 during his tenure by negotiating “substandard” labor agreements. Yet, you denied my father a hearing and left him to be expelled by the IRB, banned from speaking to teamster members with whom he spent his entire life work. A true union leader would have fought for any Teamster official targeted unfairly by the IRB across the country. By your actions, you not only betrayed union principles, you betrayed dedicated and loyal union leaders who fought to get you elected. My father and I, as well as other officers of our local, raised money, traveled the country on your behalf, visited numerous jobs sites and spoke at rallies to get you elected.

The facts are that neither my father, nor I, nor any officers, have been charged with any sort of financial misconduct. We’ve had nothing to do with the mob, never been charged with any crime. This leaves the IRB only with the vague charge of “nepotism” because several family members have served the local we helped build. But there is no law nor regulation that prevents family members from serving their union. What matters is whether the officers provide the local with good services and representation. The Teamster membership we have served, and which elected us repeatedly, is the best judge of that. Political life has seen many families, from the Kennedys to the Bushs to the Clintons, who have been elected to political office. With all due respect, I ask: How far would you have gotten in your efforts to become International President if your name wasn’t Hoffa?

It’s a shame you never really stood up to the IRB when it was clear this power hungry overreaching organization consistently exceeded its authority, trampled on due process, curbed free speech and overturned union democracy. Twenty years ago, some 264 members of congress criticized the consent decree that created the IRB in a letter to the Justice Department when it was first proposed. US Senator Sam Nunn of the Senate Permanent Investigations Subcommittee presciently warned that *“the government has clearly crossed over into a new frontier in law enforcement, injecting itself into the operation of labor unions.”* *Everything the Senator warned about has come to pass – under your tenure as IBT President.*

To justify its continuing existence and the obscene salaries paid to its investigators, (according to Labor Dept records, chief IRB investigator Charles Carberry made \$1.1 million in salary over a two and half year period) the IRB needs to keep the pot boiling, taking political sides and trumping up charges against targets in the union. The IRB is an ongoing drain on the union treasury built through the hard earned efforts of teamsters who work hard for a living.

Are the IRB and the Consent Decree simply facts of life that the union cannot change and must endure? Your father and others who built the union would surely say no – absolutely not! An earlier generation of union leaders were told that poor wages and working conditions were simply facts of life that couldn't be changed, but they fought hard and changed these conditions. They fought for the master freight agreement and dignity for members who drove the trucks and served in many other difficult and dangerous occupations. They found allies in Washington and state capitals. They challenged unfair laws that helped employers or hindered the goals of the union. Instead of protecting union members who are unfairly targeted by the IRB, you have joined with the witch hunters as they create a climate of fear, divide the membership, trample on due process, the right of free speech and free association that are the lifeblood of a democratic union. You speak of unity, but you help the IRB divide and conquer a demoralized membership.

Challenging the IRB, of course, would take leadership – standing up for elected officers and members of the union when they are denied due process instead of treating us as potential rivals to be eliminated and silenced. The old union song “Which Side Are You On?” is very relevant in the light of your actions.

I raise my voice here on behalf of the many dedicated Teamster officials and members who have been silent and who fear to speak publicly against the loss of internal democracy and free speech. You have done more damage to Local 714 in the past six months than former IBT President Ron Carey or the IRB, acting on its own, ever did. If you persist in this course, other union members will also find their voice, and undertake the effort to take back their union and return it to its rightful purpose as a democratic institution that protects and advances the interests of its membership.

Respectfully,

Robert Hogan
Local 714

Cc: General Executive Board members