Okland’s History with the United Brotherhood of Carpenters

Okland had been signatory with the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America (UBC) for several decades for work performed in the State of Utah, however, recent events have alienated our Utah workforce against the UBC, and therefore, we are not signatory with the UBC.

All of Okland’s Utah Collective Bargaining Agreements with the UBC prior to Oct. 1, 2000 were negotiated with the Utah Council of Carpenters and Pat Eyre, their local Utah business agent.

In early 2000 the local Utah Council was replaced with The Rocky Mountain Regional Council (three states-Colorado, Utah and Wyoming) and as of June 16, 2000 Pat Eyre, their local Utah Business Agent, was pressured to “resign”. The new Council instituted a 4% of gross pay dues deduct which the membership had previously voted down. Okland’s Utah carpenter employees then expressed their concern to Okland management about the changes in the carpenters union in Utah and the dues deduct.

October 1, 2000 – Okland signed a new 3 year collective bargaining agreement with The Rocky Mountain Regional Council for work performed only in the State of Utah. The new local Utah business agent for the union, Phil Harmon, was fair and reasonable in contract negotiations.

March 29, 2001 – The UBC terminates its association with the national and local Utah AFL-CIO and national and local Utah Building Trades Councils. Again, Okland’s Utah carpenter employees expressed their concern to Okland management about what is happening with their Utah union.

2002 – The council changes again from The Rocky Mountain Regional Council to the Mountainwest Regional Council (changing states again-New Mexico, Colorado and Utah) and Phil Harmon, the local Utah business agent resigns due to his concern on where the Utah union is headed. Our Utah carpenter employees again expressed their concern to Okland Management.

Summer 2003 – The council changes again from The Rocky Mountain Regional Council to the SouthWest Regional Council (changing states again-Southern California, Nevada, Arizona and Utah). An entourage of union leaders from Southern California flies to Utah and introduced themselves to Okland management. The local Utah union leadership is installed by the Southern California union leaders, not by the local members and the local Utah leaders are controlled “like puppets” by Southern California. Okland’s Utah carpenter employees attend the local Utah union membership meetings and they tell Okland Management that their voice is no longer being heard by the union, that it is now controlled by the SouthWest Council leaders. The members vote, but the
SouthWest union leadership goes against the vote and do whatever they want saying, “It is in the best interest of the Union”.

Fall 2003 – Jan 2004:
Okland enters into negotiations with the SouthWest for a new Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) for work performed only in the State of Utah. However, Okland is informed by the Utah Carpenters Pension Trust Fund that due to a current unvested liability status in the Utah Pension Trust, each participating employer is required to contribute a minimum of $0.52 to keep the fund intact. The SouthWest Council in their proposed contract will only allow $0.10 to be funded to the Utah Pension, with the balance going to the Southern California Pension Plan. That would expose Okland to an Unfunded Liability Charge by the Utah Trust Fund, and potentially cause a loss of benefits to the Utah Pensioners. Therefore, Okland rejects the SouthWest CBA and ends negotiations. In addition, the SouthWest proposes that the Utah Employers abandon the Utah Carpenters Health and Welfare Plan and instead pay into the Southern California Health and Welfare Plan which would cost the employer and the carpenter employees more money due to the high cost of health care in the plan because of the high cost of health care in Southern California.

Feb. 2003: Several of our lead Utah carpenters approach Okland management indicating that the majority of our Utah carpenters do not want to be represented by the SouthWest Council, that they want to get back to local Utah leadership and representation. They indicate to us that they are working with the National Labor Relations Board to set up their own local Utah carpenter’s union.

March 2003: Several of our Utah carpenters indicated that they have organized a new union named the Utah Carpenters Association and would like to enter into negotiations for a new collective bargaining agreement for work performed in the State of Utah. Okland negotiates with this new union and signs a new Utah contract as of April 1, 2004.

April 15, 2004: Okland withdraws our recognition of the SouthWest as the bargaining unit for our Utah carpenter employees.

April 22, 2004: The SouthWest files unfair labor practice charges against Okland stating that the Utah Carpenters Association was organized by company management (which is untrue).

May 26, 2004: The SouthWest calls for a strike against Okland in Utah even though the strike was voted down in a Utah union membership meeting a few days earlier. Out of Okland’s nearly 100 Utah carpenter employees, only 17 went out on strike, the rest came to work and continue to work. Since the SouthWest didn’t have enough local support for a strike, they imported “paid picketers” from Southern California and Nevada. The SouthWest would fly them in on Monday.
morning, put them up in local hotels and fly them back on Friday afternoon. This continued for several months.

Summer 2004: Okland’s Utah carpenter employees asked what would be the best way to resolve the current situation with the unfair labor practice charges, without recognizing the SouthWest. We indicated that if they wanted an election to vote the SouthWest out, that would be the best way; but a vote couldn’t occur until the outstanding Unfair Labor Practice (ULP) charge regarding the UCA was settled or dismissed. Therefore, our carpenters indicated that they would willingly dissolve the Utah Carpenters Association (UCA) to have the ULP charges dismissed so they could vote. Therefore, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) accepted a settlement of the Unfair Labor Practice charges regarding the Utah Carpenters Association on November 11, 2004 without any admission of wrongdoing. It is anticipated that the NLRB will have an election scheduled for mid 2005 so our Utah carpenter employees can choose who they want to represent them.

In the meantime, Okland has not had any picket lines in Utah for a long time, and even the last ones we had were small and insignificant in number. (There have been no picket lines in any areas outside of metropolitan Salt Lake and contiguous areas). The SouthWest has placed banners at several of our jobsites, but it hasn’t had any effect.

None of our projects have been affected by the union action, all of our work continues to progress without incident or interruption. The pickets or banners are not recognized and are condemned by the local Utah AFL-CIO and the local Utah Building Trades Council. All other trade contractors and their employees are coming to work and have crossed any picket lines set up by the SouthWest.

The bottom line is that the SouthWest has no support from contractors, subcontractors, the majority of the local previous union members, or any other construction trades union or their members.