

May 24, 2011

Ms. Gail Cartmail, Assistant General Secretary
Unite
128 Theobalds Road
Holborn, London WC1X 8TN

Dear Sister Cartmail:

The officers of the United Steelworkers are writing to condemn the Southampton City Council for its plan to sack thousands of workers and re-engage them on substantially lower terms and conditions, and to express our full support for Unite in its struggle to achieve justice through industrial action.

We have been informed that the Southampton city council plans to sack 4,300 employees. The council plans to then re-employ them on substantially lower terms and conditions. The workers consist of care workers, street cleaners, refuse collectors, social workers, parking enforcement officers, building trades and a range of different services throughout the whole council.

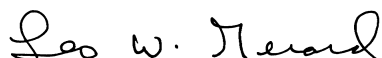
We have also been informed that the Conservative leader of the Southampton city council has been unwilling to negotiate or hold talks using the conciliation service in order to arrive at a fair resolution of the dispute.

What Unite is encountering in Southampton is exactly what the USW is encountering throughout North America. Here, leaders of numerous states and provinces are blaming the workers and their unions for fiscal problems caused by reckless excesses by rich bankers. Conservatives are trying to cut terms and conditions of modestly paid workers and restrict their union activity.

Make no mistake about it, Southampton city council's refusal to negotiate and conciliate is a blatant attempt to undermine the council employees' collective bargaining rights. This is part of an orchestrated trans-Atlantic strategy to weaken unions and impoverish workers.

As you know, our unions are also coordinating our strategy through the Workers Uniting alliance. We stand beside you and commend you for the courage to strike and take other industrial action. We stand ready to work with you and support you in any way possible in this important struggle.

In solidarity,



Leo W. Gerard
International President



Stanley Johnson
International Secretary-
Treasurer



Thomas Conway
International Vice President
(Administration)



Ken Neumann
National Director for
Canada



Fred Redmond
International Vice President
(Human Affairs)

- c: Len McCluskey, General Secretary, Unite
Simon Dubbins, Director of International Affairs, Unite
Ben Davis, Director of International Affairs, USW