

USWA and Local Union Battle in Courts Over Leadership

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The battle over control of a United Steelworkers of America local union has moved to federal court, with a brief stop Wednesday at Territorial Court. Attorneys for the USWA international union filed a petition in Territorial Court to have Local 8248 president David Maynard evicted from the local's headquarters in Estate Whim.

Local 8248's attorneys had already filed a class-action lawsuit in District Court Tuesday on behalf of Maynard, other officers and about 90 union members against international officials, alleging various irregularities in their takeover of the local. Territorial Court Judge Edgar Ross was presiding over the evictions petition Wednesday but was forced to stop the proceedings after Local 8248 attorneys filed a notice to have the case transferred to District Court.

The attorneys, Lydia Logie Moolenaar and Martial Webster, said the "notice of removal" meant that Ross had no choice but to bow out of the case unless the District Court sends it back to him. The attorneys argued that the issues in this case involved federal labor laws and should be heard in federal court. They also have a second suit pending in District Court on behalf of former Local 8248 president Lloyd Daley and want that and all other legal issues combined and decided in the federal jurisdiction.

The dispute centers around the international attempt to remove Maynard from office because he has a felony conviction. Fredrick Joseph, USWA sub-district director, testified before Ross – before the proceedings were halted – that federal labor laws and the union bylaws bar a convicted felon from holding a union office. Under questioning by his attorney, Michael Sanford, Joseph said he needs access to the building and records to file grievances on behalf of union members. During his testimony Wednesday, Joseph said he had heard "rumors" of Maynard's legal problem but had no proof until after Maynard was elected, even though the conviction was in Territorial Court.

He said the local is still under his administrator ship, which means he had control over its bank accounts and other records, but he said Maynard refuses to leave the office and had changed the locks on the building. Maynard has admitted that he has a conviction of extortion, but maintains that Joseph and other USWA officials knew about it, but still encouraged him to run for office because they wanted Daley out as President.

Moolenaar said Joseph had all the power to the Whim building cut off and the telephones disconnected. The class-action suit alleges that international officials including Joseph are interfering with operation of Local 8248 even though Maynard has not been officially charged with any violation as president nor been given a hearing on why he should be removed. Also named as defendants in the suit are Hovensa Oil and several of the refinery's subcontractors who have labor contracts with USWA.