

MUA boss lets rip at member

EWIN HANNAN, The Australian, May 04, 2013

A MARITIME union organiser has delivered an expletive-filled tirade against a member who criticised his work, defending his performance by saying he had been "locked up by coppers plenty of times".

In a 2400-word email circulated to colleagues, Doug Heath, an organiser with the union's West Australian branch, labels the member "gutless" 26 times, calling him a "f . . king maggot", a "snivelling grub", a "f . . kwit" and a "piece of shit".

"I have been locked up by coppers plenty of times in pursuit of industrial outcomes," he wrote in the April 24 email.

"I have had to front the Cole royal commission to defend industrial militancy. I have had to defend myself (and the union) in the Federal Court and have dealt with five separate applications by employers and ABCC prosecutors seeking to strip me of my right of entry certificate."

Mr Heath was unrepentant yesterday when contacted by The Weekend Australian, saying he was responding to an anonymous, incorrect complaint.

"I have had bosses calling us f . . king idiots," he said. "We're not politicians and we're not accountable to the (public). We're accountable to our members."

Among the issues raised by the member on the foreign vessel Skandi Hawke was Mr Heath's insistence that new mattresses be installed on the vessel as it had entered Australian waters.

"This vessel is just over a year old and has done little work," the member wrote. "Many bunks have never been slept in. None of the MUA crew were or are dissatisfied with their mattresses."

Mr Heath wrote that it is union policy that employers supply new mattresses, pillows and linen when a foreign vessel enters Australian waters and the "gutless author" and "piece of shit" had to be joking if he thought he was going to reverse the union position.

The member also suggested that Mr Heath did not know what the vessel's employees were paid, prompting Mr Heath to call him an "imbecile" who was "full of shit". "We spend all day, every day bluing with bosses. I enjoy that part of the job," Mr Heath wrote.

"What I can't cop is ill-informed bullshit by a gutless individual who won't put a name to a document. This is the sort of shit that makes me want to throw the job in."

He wrote that 99 per cent of the union membership respected the work of MUA officials and appreciated their efforts.

"We don't always get it right, but we don't die wondering. The one per cent of members -- like the maggot who wrote this letter slugging me and my efforts -- can get f . . ked," he wrote. Declaring the member a "f . . king maggot", he said it was "time this gutless piece of shit owned up and sent some form of apology".

Australian Mines and Metals chief executive Steve Knott said if one of his employees "engaged in such a vile attack on one of our members, or a fellow employee, they would be frog-marched out of the business in a nanosecond".

The MUA national office declined to comment.

Naivety rules debt: David Murray

Annabel Hepworth, National business correspondent, The Australian, May 04, 2013

FORMER Future Fund chairman David Murray has warned that political management has overtaken economic management, putting Australia on the same path as fiscal crisis-plagued Europe and the US.

"That's reflected in weak productivity, an entitlement-driven economic agenda and a naive belief in debt," Mr Murray told The Weekend Australian.

"The circumstances that got us there are similar to other places but . . . we have had far more to work with, with 21 years of growth and a terms-of-trade boom. And we've been able to sit and watch the unfortunate lessons of what's been done elsewhere. And those lessons have not been picked up."

The former Commonwealth Bank of Australia chief executive urged a focus on boosting productivity as the only sustainable way to deal with the impact of global forces.

He warned "we have also driven a culture where you are not allowed to talk about the industrial relations system", even though "at the heart of competitiveness problems is usually a labour cost problem".

The comments come as business leaders become increasingly worried about Australia's economic management and have been warning new business tax grabs in the budget will just make a bad situation worse.

Wayne Swan has blamed a "perfect storm of torrid global forces and the high dollar" for smashing budget revenues.

But the Business Council of Australia this week declared the budget was "broken" and the government had lost control of budget strategy.

Mr Murray said the global financial crisis should have been the time to put the nation in a position to make significant structural changes that would have alleviated the effects of the mining investment boom and at the same time made the nation more competitive. This would have made it easier to deal with the strong dollar.

"Now we have an election year in which the electorate is being bombarded with different versions of economic data, different prescriptions of the Australian economy," he said.

"There is no reality check out there, and the reality is that Australia cannot afford anywhere near the levels of debt of some European countries and the US.

"We just under-estimate completely the vulnerability of the current account, the budget and the AAA credit rating," Mr Murray said.

"That's part of this political management driving economic management."

On industrial relations, he said productivity offsets needed to be tied to wage improvements.

"We had a position a few years ago where that would have been easier to do," he said.

"Now it's harder. Every day it's left it gets harder to do that."