

Nolan Rampy—So, I'm part of the group that's been organizing the campaign against Bill Ruprecht in support of the Sotheby's Art-house workers. And it was brought to my attention by one of the senators that there was reasonable amount of debate among SGA senators about this, and why we're doing it and what's going on. So I just wanted to take this opportunity to give a very brief summary about why we're doing what we're doing and the logic behind it, and I would be able to take any questions. So just to be as brief as possible, everyone knows that Bill Ruprecht is a board of trustees member here at UVM, and he's also a CEO of the Sotheby's Art House in NY. Sotheby's, since July 1st of last year has locked out the art handlers at Sotheby's. This is a group of 40 members who make around \$40,000-\$50,000 a year. He's locked them about of contract negotiations, because he wants to break up the union. He wants to cut overtime pay, and be able to hire non-union employees, among a variety of other things. He's doing this under the pretext of the current economic crisis, despite the fact that Sotheby's made \$774 million last year, which is their second highest level of profits ever. In addition to that, Bill Ruprecht decided to give himself a raise of \$3 million; he now makes \$6 million a year. This is all happening again, while they are telling these workers to take pay-cuts. These are people who make \$40,000-\$50,000 a year, apparently that's too much. And in addition to that, so the 42 art house workers, art handlers, combined their salaries come about to make \$3.2-\$3.3 million a year. I hope that the figures that I am throwing out, and I can go into more detail about it in a second, but I hope that this does away with any notion that this is just business for, that this is about economics. That this is not—Sotheby's is reporting record number profits. Bill Ruprecht gave himself a raise that is roughly equivalent to a yearly salary of 42 workers. This is a really gross, blatant attack on working-class people. And we are taking up this campaign right now; because we firmly believe that the actions of Bill Ruprecht, as the CEO of Sotheby's art house, are completely out of line of the values that UVM aspires to—things about justice, social equality. And so our demand is that either Bill Ruprecht either do the right thing, and settle up with the art house workers, with the art handlers, or he should step down from the Board of Trustees because his actions and his values are clearly not in line with those of UVM. He's a representative of UVM, regardless of whether he's

here in Vermont, or he's back in Vermont as the CEO. So, I am going to leave it at that.

Senator Nenopolous: Thanks Nolan for coming in. I'm curious to see if you have you spoken to him, his workers, and/or anyone close to the situation.

Nolan Lampy: Yeah, so we got started on this because one of the workers, his name is Julian Tish, contacted me and asked if we could start campaign and solidarity for them. So I have not spoken with Bill Ruprecht, but I have four of the art handlers who came up actually during one of the protests and rally last Friday for the Board of Trustees. So yes, I have spoken with them extensively. So 4 of the art, so I have spoke

Senator Nenopolous: so do they feel in your opinion that they are violated from what's happened, did they express that?

Nolan: Yeah, they feel that it's just a completely unnecessary attack, that's really intended to demoralize the. It's not necessary that this be happening. In fact, Sotheby's is in a position where they can give them a raise, again because of their profits. So this is all about demoralizing the workers, and keeping their heads down and not ask for anything more. It's worth nothing that the firm that Sotheby's hires is Jackson Lewis, anyone who is interested in learning about him can Google Jackson Lewis attorney. This is a group that Sotheby's has never used in the contract negotiation before, and Jackson Lewis is a notoriously anti-union firm. So Sotheby's had the intention from the beginning of smashing this union. And it's very clear, I think on who they chose as their representations. People from Jackson Lewis gives seminars to managers or other corporate people on union busting, and I am not joking about that, look it up. It's really pretty disgusting.

Senator Devivo: My first question is have you spoken with Bill Ruprecht about this

Nolan: Nope.

Senator Devivo: Do you plan to meet Bill Ruprecht about it?

Nolan: No.

Senator Devivo: Why?

Nolan: We've made our demands known. And he's more than welcome to contact us if he's interested. But I don't really have much interest in speaking to people in power. He knows what he is doing. I'm not going to tell him anything he doesn't know. He knows what he's doing. We know what he's doing. And so, I am more interested in talking to students, faculty,

community members, people who don't realize what's going on here, and what's at stake.

Senator Devivo: how do you think this situation effects negatively or positively to students.

Nolan: It affects UVM students negatively for a couple of reasons. One is the fact that the same ideology, that Bill Ruprecht is bringing into Sotheby's, and this corporate minded, strictly for profit ideology, this neo-liberal ideology, is the same ideology that he brings into his work as a member of the Board of Trustees. You can't separate those two things. I don't think that there is a coincidence in the fact that we have Board of Trustee members who are pursuing things like this, while simultaneously their attacks on faculty and staff contracts, while simultaneously our tuition is going up, roughly 5% year to year. Faculty is getting laid off, while UVM class sizes are increasing. This is the result of the privatization of education, and this is a direct result of the very same ideology that Bill Ruprecht is taking to the Sotheby's workers. And that's why it matters to us. Not to mention that every single person in this room is a future worker. And so this attack on unions, this breaking up of unions, and it is affecting the type of business environments that we all go into in just a couple of years. So this stuff very much should matter to all of us.

Senator Holland: you listed off a few reasons why Bill Ruprecht did the lock out, so I was just wondering where you go those reasons?

Nolan: So, part of it is from speaking with the, I mean it depends on which fact or figure you're asking me about because they come from a variety of sources. You can certainly look up articles that report facts about this. Some of it comes from art handlers specifically about the nature of their contract negotiations and what's going on with them. So it's a variety of public information that people can look up on line and also speak with the art handlers.

Senator Holland: So you said that Bill sort of has the profit ideology, and I was just wondering if you could give us any examples of how he individually has made for-profit decisions on the Board of Trustees?

Nolan. Yeah I do. I can't speak specially about the decisions that Bill Ruprecht has made, policies he's voted for. In fact, if anyone wants to tell me where those things are available, I'd be happy to go look at them. This is more about a broader ideology, and the broader direction of both unions in

this country and also where we've been seeing UVM go. It's worth noting that Bill Ruprecht is on the labor advisory board here at UVM, which is kind of scary.

Senator Matthews: One thing to confirm, this whole initiative that was started was because these workers contacted you. This wasn't students contacting them, it was workers contacting students?

Nolan: It's sort of a mix, because we had know the art house Sotheby's had been going on for a while, and there had been vague talk, should we do something, should we organize around it? And then when Julian Tish, one of the art handlers, contacted me specifically and asked when, you know, we need to do something about this, because they were reaching out to us. We need to organize a solidarity.

Senator Matthews: Why do you think that only pro-union people should be on labor-advisory board. Don't you think that diverse opinions are what matters, what makes our university what it is. Why should only pro-labor union people be on the advisory board?

Diversity opinion is good on any board, or any type of group that you're working on. But I do think that it is problematic, when someone is openly hostile to unions, and their formation to be on a group that's about labor work, when you're talking about being anti-union, you are talking about driving down the wages and living standards of people. It's through collective bargaining that allows workers to raise their wages, raise their living standards, get better health care. And I do have a problem with someone being on the labor advisory group, who takes an openly hostile stance towards labor. I do think that that is problematic.

Senator Mansfield: What would happen ideally, and how would you want SGA to help, or what do you want us to do?

Part of the reason for being here was at the request of an SGA member to simply you all why we are doing what we are doing, and maybe clarifying some misunderstandings. So I am not coming here with a specific proposal, so much as I am to clarify when you all see these posters on campus, you know what we are doing and why we're doing it. And even if you do not necessarily agree with us, I think that it is important. However if SGA were to put forward a resolution in support of Bill Ruprecht either settling up with the Sotheby's workers or stepping down from the BOT then, that would be fantastic. I would love to see that come out of SGA

Senator Heffrin: So, I know a lot about unions argue about the luxuries benefits that they receive, I was just wondering if you had figures on the benefits that these art handlers receive such as apartments, compensation, and retirement even?

I can't speak too terribly in depth about them. But one of the thing that they have as a sliding scale in terms of their pay based on seniority, the longer you're there the more you get paid. That's something that they have been able to negotiate through their union. In addition to that, they get I think reasonably good health coverage. I can't speak in too great details about that. And in addition, they have a good sort of good deal, or arrangement going on about overtime pay. That a lot of the money that comes from earning that time and a half that you get when you go into overtime. One of the things that is under attack in the contract negotiations is that overtime pay. That a lot of the workers, particularly the ones who have families rely on in order to provide for their children, and things like that.

Old Business

Bill Allocating Funds to UVM Hillel. Bill Passes.

Bill recognizing VSTEP as club of the month. Bill passes.

Bill derecognizing Multiracial Student Group

Amendments made to the bill suggest that MSG asked for De-recognition, and not a request by the SGA itself.

Bill Derecognizing Conscious Magazine. Bill Passes.

Senate suspends the rules.