STATE OF WASHINGTON

BEFORE THE PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS COMMISSION

In the matter of the petition of:)
MATT HANSON) CASE 18938-E-04-3006
Involving certain employees of:) DECISION 8832 - PECE
CITY OF SEATTLE) ORDER OF DISMISSAL
)

On October 26, 2004, Matt Hanson filed a petition for investigation of a question concerning representation with the Public Employment Relations Commission, seeking to decertify Teamsters Union, Local 117 (union) as exclusive bargaining representative of certain employees of the City of Seattle. The petition identified 33 employees, and described the unit as "all warehousers classes".

A routine letter was mailed to the employer, requesting a list of employees. In a response filed on November 23, 2004, the employer indicated that the petitioner is seeking decertification as to only a portion of a larger unit. The employer also supplied a copy of a collective bargaining agreement between the union and the employer which was in effect through December 31, 2004.

The petitioner was notified that his petition appeared to seek an inappropriate "severance-decertification" affecting only a portion of the employees who have historically been included in a much larger bargaining unit. The petitioner was given a period of 14 days in which to show cause why the petition should not be dismissed. The petitioner responded by letter dated December 20, 2004, stating the petition shouldn't be dismissed because only the

warehouse workers at City Light are seeking decertification and that the warehouse workers do not have lateral transfer seniority with other warehouse positions in the City of Seattle.

DISCUSSION

A decertification petitioner must take the unit as he or she finds it. WAC 391-25-210(1) states:

In proceedings on a petition for "decertification" under WAC 391-25-070(6)(c) or 391-25-090(2), the parties shall not be permitted to remove positions from or add positions to the existing bargaining unit.

The Commission had rejected "severance-decertification" petitions long before that rule was adopted. In *City of Seattle*, Decision 2612 (PECB, 1987), where an employee sought to decertify only a select group of employees from a larger bargaining unit, the Commission wrote:

The distinction between "decertification" of an incumbent exclusive bargaining representative and "severance" of a part of the existing bargaining unit is well founded and clear. Proceedings in the "decertification" category are characterized by employees seeking to be rid of their present union, with the result that they end up with no union representation. By contrast, cases in the "severance" category involve a petition of one organization seeking to carve out a separate bargaining unit from a larger unit historically represented by the same or another organization. In both types of cases, the Commission must honor statutory directive that it consider the "history of bargaining". RCW 41.56.060. A decertification petitioner does not have the prerogative to fashion a new bargaining unit or voting group, however. Rather, employees who seek to be rid of their union must take the existing unit as they find it and must move to decertify the context of the existing bargaining unit. Accordingly, petitions which, as here, simultaneously seek "severance" and "decertification" are

precluded by controlling precedent of the Public Employment Relations Commission. See, City of Seattle, Decision 1229-A (PECB, 1982) [Commission Executive Director's dismissal of "severance-decertification" petition seeking to remove some, but not all, of the employees from an existing bargaining unit of City of employees represented by Plumbers 32]; Valley General Hospital, Decision 1333 (PECB, 1982) [Executive Director dismissed "severance-decertification" petition]. The Commission's decisions on this subject are, in turn, based on precedents of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). Campbell Soup Co., 11 NLRB 234 (1055) [cited by Commission, with approval, as standing for the proposition that severance principles may not be applied to obtain decertification of part of an existing bargaining unit; Oakwood Tool & Engineering Co., 122 NLRB 812 (1958); Associated General Contractors of California, Inc., 209 NLRB 363 (1974).

A petition seeking a "severance-decertification" is void from the outset, and must be dismissed as such.

NOW, THEREFORE, it is

ORDERED

The petition for investigation of a question concerning representation filed in the above matter is DISMISSED.

Issued at Olympia, Washington, this 10th day of January, 2005.

PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS COMMISSION

MARVIN L. SCHURKE, Executive Director

This order will be the final order of the agency unless a notice of appeal is filed with the Commission under WAC 391-25-660.