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New row raises Interflora stakes

Simon Fluendy, Mail on Sunday 24 October 2004

ANOTHER clash has erupted between the board of Interflora and rebel members of the mutually owned florists' network.

Financial Mail last week revealed details of legal threats against leaders of the disgruntled florists who are questioning plans by Interflora's board to sell a 65% stake to venture capitalist 3i.

Lawyers acting for Geoff Hughes, leader of one rebel group, have warned chief executive Steve Richards that he could face libel action over comments he made to Financial Mail.

Richards claimed that Hughes had 'settled a defamation case' brought by Interflora.

But Jonathan Silverman, partner at law firm Silverman Sherliker, told Financial Mail no such action had been brought.

'Richards should not have commented. He and Mr Hughes agreed to keep details confidential and agreed not to discuss them - an agreement Mr Hughes has stuck to,' Silverman said.

'It would be most unfortunate if Mr Richards

found himself on the receiving end of a legal action, though that is not what Mr Hughes wants and not what he's looking for,' he added.

Richards admitted last week that no writ had been filed against Hughes. 'It never reached court. Hughes had to write us a letter of apology,' he said.

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