

CEP RAIDS AEU

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

I find it necessary to write to you today concerning the recent events involving the CEP Raid of AEU. The actions taken to date by a group of AEU members are contrary to the provisions of the AEU Constitution including but not limited to Section 13. More specifically, they are working in the interest of a rival organization (CEP) and are engaged in conduct prejudicial to the good order and discipline of the AEU. As a trade unionist and the AEU President, I am very disappointed and disheartened with these events.

I have read the invitation to AEU members to join the CEP which was recently distributed by e-mail. The rationale conveyed for this raid of AEU is that, "*It is time for us to join the House of Labour.*" It is further stated that, "*We have struggled as an in-house union and will continue to struggle alone.*" All unions whether they are in a House of Labour or not, face challenges and struggles. The very reason unions were created was because of the challenges and struggles experienced by workers.

Unions in the House of Labour are not immune to hardship and struggle. We are all aware the PSAC, who is affiliated with the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), is currently struggling to maintain pension benefits for its members and has also struggled on many other fronts. The Canadian Auto Workers (CAW), another large union affiliated with the CLC has also experienced major concessions in their recent rounds of bargaining.

In fact, some members associated with a House of Labour have approached me to join AEU. They have indicated that they feel they would be better served by AEU. In addition, previous union members affiliated with the House of Labour, left that union to join AEU. Since joining AEU, these members have conveyed to me that they are extremely satisfied with AEU's service.

All to say, joining a union affiliated with a House of Labour does not guarantee you will reap greater benefits than you currently enjoy, nor will you cease to encounter struggles or challenges.

AEU has enjoyed many achievements and successes. As some of you will recall, AEU won the pay equity fight. Our membership benefited greatly from this major success. Unfortunately, some unionized employees who were not members of AEU did not achieve pay equity within the PSAC/Component Structure. The difference in salaries, to this day, remains significant.

Although CEP may represent staff unions, it is apparent from reviewing the CEP website and their *Owner's Manual* that the bulk of their membership works at "pulp and paper mills, telephone companies, in the oil gas, chemical and mining industries." They also work in printing, radio and broadcasting, hotel and trucking industry.

Contrary to CEP, AEU only represents staff union members in the PSAC Family. This means the AEU has intimate knowledge of its membership's interests, their workplace and the Employers within the PSAC Family. This is key to our success in many areas such as pay equity and collective bargaining.

Furthermore, contrary to the recent communiqué inviting AEU members to join CEP, it is inaccurate to say that UES is not affiliated with a House of Labour. UES is in fact affiliated with the Fédération des Travailleurs et Travailleuses du Québec (FTQ).

AEU Collective Agreements generally provide for similar or equivalent working conditions, salaries and benefits as those negotiated by UES who is affiliated with a House of Labour. I share this with you in support of my statement to the effect that a union affiliated with the House of Labour does not necessarily enjoy better benefits, salaries and/or working conditions. This is not meant to undermine or disrespect UES, its membership or any House of Labour, it is merely meant to provide perspective.

I note the invitation to join CEP does not provide specific information pertaining to the dues structure which I find surprising since this information is readily available in the CEP Constitution and other documentation listed on the CEP website. It is clear that in CEP, each member's dues payment is shared between the national union and the Local.

As outlined in AEU's recent communiqué, the CEP Constitution stipulates that .0078 of basic salary is remitted to the national union. The CEP *Owner's Manual* confirms this amount and further states that the Local union's dues portion is about the same amount as the national dues. This clarifies where the 1.6% figure comes from ($.0078 + .0078 = 1.56\%$) which was conveyed to me by some members. Please be aware as well, the CEP national dues can be increased to .0096 of basic salary should the strike fund fall below \$15 million.

As an AEU member, you are currently paying 1.035% of your salary in union dues. Should you join CEP, you will pay higher union dues. I submit to you there is nothing of substance to suggest you will receive better union services from CEP than you are currently receiving from AEU.

A CEP Local is responsible for processing grievances up to and including arbitration. This is not only stipulated in the CEP Constitution but also conveyed in CEP's *Owner's Manual* which states:

"Local expenses can include the cost for time off work for officers to carry out union duties, costs for sending delegates to union courses, conventions and special meetings, and for grievance arbitrations, lawyers or other advisors."

A CEP Local is also responsible for the cost of negotiations as noted in CEP's *What's Inside* document which states:

"Local dues cover the cost of local union administration, including the cost of negotiations".

The questions you might ask yourself is: *"What exactly am I getting for higher dues should I join CEP?"*

I am concerned you are being asked to make a hasty decision without full knowledge of all the information and implications such a decision entails.

As an AEU member, you receive professional representation, be it at the collective bargaining table, grievance representation including mediation and arbitration, etc. Within our membership, we have professional service representatives and professional negotiators. AEU is and will continue to be committed to equality, equity, protection of human rights and social justice.

I am saddened that the time, effort and energy put into raiding our union was not put into assisting AEU in continuing to provide excellent service to our membership.

YOU are the union and our strength as a union relies on the involvement of EACH AND EVERYONE OF YOU.

As your President, I very much want you to remain with AEU. I have provided you with additional factual information which hopefully will lead you to make an informed decision in this important matter. After carefully considering ALL factors, I believe you will conclude that AEU is the right union for you.

In Solidarity,

Lucette Charron
AEU President