

AEEF Comments to October 5, 2011 Trustees Meeting

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. For time and accuracy's sake, and because I'm a lousy speaker, I will be reading from written notes.

My name is John MacGibbon, I'm an editor and I work for FRONTLINE, the best show on television. I have worked at WGBH for 13 years. I am also a shop steward and proud member of AEEF-CWA Local 1300.

I am here today representing the AEEF because, after sending all of you letters last week expressing our concern for the turn of events at WGBH and indicating our hopes to meet with you individually and discuss ways to remedy those circumstances, we received a written response from Amos Hostetter on Monday, sent on your behalf, which included an invitation to address you today in lieu of trying to meet with you individually. However, the content of the letter, far from dissuading us from trying to meet with you personally, illustrates precisely why we feel it is urgent that we meet face-to-face with each of you.

While the letter conveys your unwavering support for Jon and his team as well as for their actions in dealing with our union over the past year, it proceeds to scold the union for misdeeds we never committed. "You ignored the need for urgency," it reads and "you were only willing to meet a few days a month." For those of us who were there at the bargaining table or who regularly advised the bargaining committee, these statements are so divorced from the reality of events they indicate to us that the Board has been profoundly misled about those events and the reasons for management's extreme behavior. For now, we are proceeding on the assumption that you will want to hear for yourselves what our experiences were, how they contributed to the current situation, and how, together, we can remedy that situation.

So that's the official statement from the union, but I'd like to give you a few of my own thoughts as well. I do not think it makes sense to argue over mistakes that have been made in the past. I think it's safe to say that we've all made mistakes, union, management, and yourselves. Personally I think we're standing in a giant mistake and that WGBH and Harvard would both be better off now if we had stayed where we were, and not tried to make ourselves bigger than we needed to be. But what's past is past, and we are where we are now.

Last week I had the somewhat dubious distinction of winning WGBH's only Emmy at the News and Documentary awards. I hope that this disappointing showing is an anomaly, but I will tell you that morale among employees, both union and management is as low as it has been in my time at WGBH. Employees feel that they are disposable, interchangeable and easily replaced. I do not think that this atmosphere fosters award-

winning work. All of us, trustees, management and union, still believe in the dream of public media and what it can be.

I urge you to do the right thing, come back to the bargaining table, restore dues check off and let's move forward, working together to make us all proud to be part of the best public television station in the country, WGBH.

Thank you for your time and we hope to meet with you in the near future.