



**Association of Employees of the Educational Foundation
Communications Workers of America Local 1300**

P.O. Box 381938 Cambridge, MA 02238

www.AEEF.org



September 2011

Dear Trustee of the WGBH Educational Foundation,

Why are you a trustee?

Perhaps it's because you believe in WGBH's mission and want to be associated with a creative community that provides "programs and services that educate, inspire, and entertain, fostering citizenship and culture, the joy of learning, and the power of diverse perspectives." If so, then you have something in common with many of our members, who have devoted their skills and careers to building WGBH's reputation as a beacon of excellence in public broadcasting. And, as someone who shares an interest in preserving WGBH's role in the community and the industry, we hope you also share our deep concern with *what WGBH is becoming*.

This is not about union members complaining about pay, health care costs, or concessions—though those are legitimate concerns with profound consequences for the men and women who make their living at WGBH. No, AEEF members entered negotiations last year prepared to make the hard choices and engage in the creative problem solving that the times and circumstances required. Rather, this is about Jon Abbott's intent to remake WGBH according to the same cynical blueprint being utilized across the country to bust unions and roll back the middle class living standards workers have achieved during the past 60 years. However, because collective bargaining necessarily involves compromise and accommodation, he faced a choice: negotiate and compromise or dictate and impose. Mr. Abbott chose the latter and, in so doing, has tarnished the reputation of the institution entrusted to him.

As WGBH employees, we have experienced this firsthand. Morale among the staff has plunged and co-workers routinely express feelings of despair as they witness colleagues being laid off without notice and escorted off the premises, while others simply quit their jobs, explaining, "This isn't the WGBH I came to work for," or "I'm not leaving WGBH; WGBH left me." Outside of WGBH, hundreds of supporters, viewers, and listeners have e-mailed management expressing their disapproval of Mr. Abbott's actions, and many of them tell us they will not renew their memberships or make a donation until we have a contract. In *The Cambridge Chronicle*, Professor Emeritus Martin Evans wrote, "It is sad when an institution that one respects takes a foolish and inappropriate step. I refer, of course, to the imposition on its employees of a contract — based on WGBH's final offer to its employees." To many, WGBH has become synonymous with the union busting tactics of Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker.

This is precisely what we feared when we wrote to you on February 17, roughly one month before management imposed its terms unilaterally:

Far from deliberately trying to delay the bargaining process, AEEF has been committed since the start of these negotiations to developing mutually beneficial solutions to the very real challenges WGBH is facing. But management's aggressive tactics have forced us to devote our energies and resources to defending our union's continued existence rather than focusing them on the urgent issues at hand. We find this strategy to be profoundly counterproductive. Moreover, such a brazenly hostile approach can only lead to further escalation and increase the potential for long-term negative consequences for both parties.

WGBH and its staff already face ample challenges from a changing industry, evolving technologies, and a troubled economy; we do not need to contend with an ideologically-driven agenda that threatens to tear the institution apart from the inside. In the coming weeks, we will contact many of you directly and ask that you meet with our representatives to hear the thoughts of our members and discuss our wish to bring WGBH back—not just to the bargaining table, but from the brink.

Sincerely,

The Officers of AEEF-CWA Local 1300

Jordan Weinstein
President

Olivia Wong
Vice President

Ann Lopez
Treasurer