



SUFFOLK COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF

MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES, INC.

Suffolk County's Largest Independent Union

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October 6, 2010

Mr. Nicholas J. LaMorte, President
CSEA Local 1000
3 Garet Place
Commack, NY 11725

Dear President LaMorte:

I often thank my fellow union leaders, my fellow union brothers and sisters, for their continual support and assistance during AME's 26-year existence as an independent union. In fact, just last year when AME's 8,000 members faced down the mammoth CWA union of ¾ million members internationally when CWA attempted its unsuccessful decertification raid upon us, I received a wondrous amount of encouragement and support from the majority of unions belonging to the Public Employees Conference and the Long Island Federation of Labor. You, yourself, offered for CSEA to maintain a neutral position during that time and I offered my support of the same. While we were experiencing this raid, we reached out to John Wilhelm, President of UNITE HERE, and expressed our own encouragement and support in the decertification raid against his union by SEIU. We also communicated *directly* with Larry Cohen, CWA National President regarding the irony of one union raiding another union – while less than 8% of workers remain organized within America's private sector. Surely there are enough workers who need union organization and protection nationwide to keep our American labor movement organizers busy.

Our paths of effective union representation have crossed many times. Union paths appear to be continually intertwined in our collective efforts to provide the best union protection for our union members. I am sure you recall AME's support for NYS CSEA in your union's fight against Governor Paterson's threats regarding unpaid furloughs against your union state workers. We never hesitated to make our position of union solidarity for CSEA known! And, in our historic legacy of leaders reminiscent of Samuel Gompers who once said that, "*Labor needs to be strong in numbers, in effective organization, in the justice of its cause, and in the reasonableness of its methods. It relies on moral suasion.*" And that, President LaMorte, was said in his speech made in 1898. Well over one hundred years ago, esteemed labor leader Gompers quoted the

importance of **justice** and **morality**. When did these triumphantly proud beliefs change?

CSEA is a very large union structure. Taking just one Local as an example: CSEA Local 852 has within its local structure a total of 38 units. Within those 38 units of Local 852 are approximately 3,400 union members. And that is but one Local. There are twenty-three of these CSEA Locals throughout Long Island... of which all together make up CSEA Region I. And over these Locals, you serve as President.

From what I am comprehending, you serve more than one *Master*. As President of CSEA Region One, that position is also the AFSCME Local 1000. It appears that although you serve as advisor/overseer/President to CSEA's Region One (encompassing all of the twenty-three CSEA Locals throughout Long Island), you must adhere to the oversight provided by the higher-up union to CSEA - AFSCME. In essence, although CSEA is huge in numbers and demographics; in all of its massive immensity... CSEA at its New York State level of 6 Regions and 265,000 members - is still a **Local**. Any new unit stands to get lost in the mix.

Suffolk County AME, on the other hand, is not a local. AME is the largest independent union in all of Suffolk County; in all of Long Island; in all of New York State. We serve no *Master* who sits above us and makes decisions for us. We serve only our members – all 8,000 of them. Our AME Executive Board is made up 100% of our AME membership. Our 33 Unit Boards are made up 100% of our AME membership. Our elections entail voting for AME union representation for and by 100% AME membership. Suffolk County Community College has three seats on that Board. Our Conventions are attended by 100% AME membership, with agendas covering issues of concern *only* of our AME members.

Mr. LaMorte, the idea that several disgruntled AME members from one of our college units sought out CSEA has but one bearing on AME: it verifies that AME is no different from any other union. *How so, you ask?* Well, Mr. LaMorte, you must recognize that AME is not the first union to experience some of its members discussing union concerns with an outside union. I have, in fact, listened to an endless litany of grievances from CSEA members... who have sought out AME's independence as a possible remedy to their union woes.

However, rather than seek to engage in the union-busting tactics of management, I have provided your CSEA members with the following important advice: ***Choose to improve your union from within... not to destroy what you already have!***

While some members seek change, the grass always looks greener on the other side of the fence. However, I always knew the grass is the same on both sides of all fences. As such, I have advised your own members with the same advice that I have given to my own: to improve your own union from within. If you are dissatisfied, then seek to become more personally involved to improve the conditions which you find unacceptable. There are always changes to be made. There are always improvements to behold. And the best solutions and ideas usually come from the members themselves.

Unfortunately, at a time in American history, and most especially here in New York State where there has been a target planted firmly on the backs of all public sector workers; it sickens me to think of unions fighting other unions, rather than utilizing their resources in the real fight against administrative managements - who seek to *take more and provide less!* During these last several years as AME has continually fought County Executive Levy's ongoing attempts at privatization, unpaid furlough and layoff threats, severe understaffing at all of our county worksites – **but all the while CSEA was supporting Levy through the Working Families Party line**. CSEA would not listen to our Executive Board then... and yet you choose to listen to a few of our disgruntled and non-involved AME members now?

Justice and Morality

I had hoped, Mr. LaMorte, that as the same professional courtesy we have provided you over the years, you would have communicated directly with me about this decertification attempt against AME. The fact that you did not just confirms my fear that many union leaders, so important and integral to the existence of the positive image of the American labor movement, have forgotten or simply discarded the sanctity of Samuel Gompers' words invoking the importance of justice and morality in union leadership. Fortunately, I have not.

So before you go promising my members greener pastures, tell them what side of the fence you are really on and how much green,

cold, hard cash you gave to Steve Levy, and how much more you plan to give him in the future. ***Justice and morality deserve no less!***

Considering that you lead a union whose own Mission Statement professes principles of honesty, respect, integrity, and open communications, I believe this CSEA decertification raid is nothing more than greed, at your losses to raids too many to count. And as we would fight any and all efforts to disrupt and potentially harm and/or negatively impact the lives of our 8,000 collective membership, we will fight – ***and we will win*** - this hostile raid attempted upon Suffolk County AME by NYS CSEA. ***Justice and morality demand no less!***

Very truly yours,



Cheryl A. Felice
AME President

CAF:km

Cc: Executive Board

Board of Directors

Suffolk County Community College President & Administration

Suffolk County Community College Members