

A Vision for All of Us

In a dazzling scoop that has left the editors of The National Enquirer gnashing their teeth, I am prepared to blow the lid off the Skull-and-Bones-like secrecy of Actors' Equity governance: the Swiss bank accounts, the lavish bacchanals, the cult of personality, the marble statues of President Wyman,... sorry, I drifted off for a moment there, where was I? Oh, yes, the governance of AEA.

We have 75 Councillors – almost all from the NYC area until twenty years ago when National Representation divvied them up among the three regions according to percentage of membership. The councillors in each region meet once a month to discuss local issues and concession requests, and then the whole Council meets (via phone hookup) once a month to discuss national issues and policy.

Below this level of elected leadership meetings are four thousand committees (well, 105, but it seems like four thousand.) These committees (usually chaired by Councillors but open to any member within commuting distance of one of our three office cities) deal with concession requests, develop contract proposals and make recommendations to the Regional Boards and Council.

But why, you ask (in that B-movie cliché way you have), am I telling all this to you, a perfectly indifferent AEA member? Because things are changing --you have a new Executive Director and a new President -- and I want your input and your buy-in. Just as I suggested to you in my "Mastering the Business of Acting" column that you should know your strengths and plan for not just the next job, but the next five or ten years, your elected leaders need to assess AEA's strengths and plan our collective future.

We are gathering all the Officers, Councillors, non-Councillor Central Regional Board members and Area Liaisons together in a national conference in New York City this spring to discuss the big issues: how we provide member services, how we communicate with our members, how we handle public policy, and how we administer contracts. To prepare for this, I have asked all of these folks to think about an AEA Mission Statement, an AEA Vision: What do we want to do? Who do we want to be now? In five years? In ten?

I am asking the same thing of you. If you have a good idea, send it to me (president@actorsequity.org). Regardless of whether you share your ideas, be thinking of your version of Equity's Mission and Vision when you look at the candidate statements in this spring's election, and vote for those candidates who reflect your vision (though take those promises to halve your dues and quadruple your job opportunities with a grain of salt.) We are a very democratic union: you get to vote for a significant portion of your leadership every year. You also get to join almost any committee and place your hands on the wheels and gears of the union's workings. I would welcome your participation and assistance in the tough job of attempting to make our tough job of our career a little easier.