

To: Producers

Re: Contract Negotiations Being Discussed at the Meeting

My name is Monica Hamburg (Apprentice Member #3120).

I am unable to attend the April 3rd meeting but I would like to weigh in on the current contract negotiations between the Producers and the Performers.

As an actor, I am deeply concerned about the current propositions, most notably the desire to pay actors minimum wage.

Besides the fact that most people are unable to live on minimum wage (they are often known as “the working poor” (In fact this has been the focus of many news articles of late) – it is a highly degrading action to roll-back anyone’s wage – especially as far back as this amount.

Many actors must support themselves by having a day job. If they earn only a fraction of their day-job wage on set, what is their motivation to be on set?

Think about the investment for actors that is made for each role. There may only be several hours or days required on set for a small role - but an actor’s life involves a myriad of unpaid auditions, callbacks and time spent memorizing and preparing for their roles. All these are things actors do presently for no money simply to earn the job and subsequently to do it well. The carrot at the end of the stick is often a respectable paycheck. Tell me, at \$6 an hour, what is the carrot?

I’m sure all actors feel this is, above all, an issue of respect – unless one is famous, it is a constant struggle to earn respect in this industry – yet we love it enough to keep doing it. The passion will die quickly when we feel we are being devalued by the industry, by our employers.

Ask yourself do you want to fill a film with actors who would accept \$6/hr? The result will likely be untrained, undisciplined actors who are in it simply for the fame or exposure.

Sure, it is easy to imagine that low pay will generate large profits, but that perspective is severely short-sighted. When one feels appreciated, respected, recompensed in one’s job – everyone is happy. Rapidly, such low wages as \$6/hr will create resentment and breed disloyalty. You may gain money, but only in the short term. In the long term you will have unhappy actors who are unmotivated and the quality of your productions will suffer.

In effect this agreement will be cutting off your nose to spite your face.

I implore you to reconsider your position and pay actors the present rate or higher, rather than degrading them by reducing their wage.

Ask yourself, what message are you sending us by proposing this? That you have no respect for what we do? How would you feel about you being offered such a contract? In effect you are saying that actors are not worth very much in your eyes. Is that the message you wish to send?

Think about the calibre of actors and performances you want: Would you prefer resentful and unfocussed - or satisfied and driven?

The audience watches the actors, after all. How interested will they be to watch cynical and unqualified people on screen?

I ask that you reconsider your proposition.

Actors deserve more. Your productions deserve more.

Sincerely,

Monica Hamburg