



Amsterdam, February 13th 2007

Dear Mr. Houston,

With this letter, which will be published on the CEO website, I would like to react to your chapter in the book *Challenge and Response – Essays on Public Affairs and Transparency*, published in September 2006 by Landmarks Publishing.

In your chapter, you make no attempt to seriously assess the arguments in favour of mandatory EU rules on lobbying transparency and ethics. Instead you choose to present a grotesque caricature the Alliance for Lobbying Transparency and Ethics Regulation Europe (ALTER-EU) – a vibrant campaign which is supported by a broad and diverse coalition of citizens’ organisations from around Europe.

Moreover, in your chapter you make a variety of vicious, unsubstantiated and false accusations against Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO). You suggest that CEO “is clearly guilty of deceptive practices” and that CEO would have some hidden “ideological anti-business mission”. Anybody who visits our website or who reads our printed materials will see that CEO is fully open about all aspects of our work and our funding sources and that, though being critical of corporate political power, Corporate Europe Observatory is not on an “anti-business mission”.

During an ALTER-EU event in the Residence Palace in Brussels in January 2006, where you were invited as a speaker, you made similar false allegations against CEO. I spoke with you about this after the event and clarified your misconceptions about our financial transparency. It is disturbing to know that when you wrote the book chapter you were fully aware that your allegations against CEO are manipulative and false.

More recently, your colleague Catherine Stewart made similar claims, maybe based on your writings, in her book review of *Challenge and Response – Essays on Public Affairs and Transparency* in the October 2006 issue of *Public Affairs News*. For your information I enclose the correction sent to the editors of *Public Affairs News* by my colleague on the ALTER-EU steering committee, Paul de Clerck (Friends of the Earth Europe).

Like the other organisations in ALTER-EU, Corporate Europe Observatory has no objections whatsoever to future EU transparency obligations. On the contrary: we would most strongly welcome such obligations, which in our view should cover ALL lobbyists, including corporate lobbyists like yourself.

The reality is that not a single member company of EPACA, the organisation you preside, provides anything even remotely comparable to the financial transparency that CEO and numerous other groups in the ALTER-EU coalition unilaterally offer today. We advocate rules that would make transparency an obligation for all EU lobbyists. Such lobbying transparency should include information about clients, lobbying issues and fees. In the meanwhile, we have no hesitations about disclosing this information ourselves. We are walking the talk.

Let me finish by pointing out that your text, with its wild attacks on the proponents of mandatory lobbying disclosure, is effectively at odds with EPACA's official position, which has since January 2006 has been in support of a mandatory lobbyists' register. These contradictory signals seriously undermine EPACA's claims to be a constructive actor in the debate about how to secure improved transparency and ethics in EU lobbying.

Yours sincerely,

Erik Wesselius
Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO)
Member of the ALTER-EU steering committee

ATTACHMENT

Dear Mr. Hoy and Ms. Dawson,

I refer to a paragraph in the article “Book Review: Tales of transparency”. It says that ALTER EU and CEO 'have yet to be transparent about their finances':
http://www.publicaffairsnews.com/issues/articleview.asp?article_id=277.

This information is incorrect and I would request you to rectify that.

Members of the steering group of ALTER EU are transparent about their finances, as you can see on the following websites:

FoE Europe: <http://www.foeeurope.org/about/english.htm>

CEO: <http://www.corporateeurope.org/aboutceo.html>

LobbyControl: <http://www.lobbycontrol.de/blog/index.php/about-us-english/>

Spinwatch: <http://www.spinwatch.org/content/view/3705/13/>

Greenpeace: <http://www.greenpeace.eu/issues/about.html>

Please inform us how you will handle this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Paul de Clerck
Friends of the Earth Europe
On behalf of the ALTER EU Steering Committee