STORIES / BRANCH EXPERIENCES / TOTALENERGIES

A QUESTION.
A SUSPENSION.
A BRANCH LEFT ASKING WHY.

Distinguished Comrades,

It began with a question.

A member stood before Congress and asked his leaders for an explanation. He was participating in the affairs of his union. The union he belonged to. The union his dues helped sustain.

Instead of an answer, he received invitations to appear before the **Ethics, Grievance and Disciplinary Committee (EGDC)** - PENGASSAN's internal committee for handling grievances and disciplinary matters.

He asked for clarification of his offence.

An indefinite suspension followed.

His question remained unanswered. His participation in the union had become a disciplinary matter.

Congress should be where members speak, seek explanations and hold their representatives accountable. At the TotalEnergies branch, that experience left a troubling question hanging over the room:

If asking a question can lead to suspension, who will be willing to ask the next one?

Two chapters lost their leaders. Members demanded answers.

Two chapter chairmen and their chapter executives were removed from union office without stated offences or invitations to appear before the EGDC.

These were representatives entrusted with responsibilities by their members. Their removal deserved an explanation.

Members of the affected chapters asked why.

They, too, were suspended indefinitely.

Consider the effect on everyone watching.

A member sees what happens to a colleague who asks a question. A chapter sees its leaders removed. Those who demand an explanation find themselves facing suspension.

Before the next Congress, members already have something else to consider: the possible cost of speaking.

That is how fear enters a meeting room. It does not need to occupy a seat. It only needs members to remember what happened to the last person who stood up.

Then came the dispute over annual leave.

For field staff, annual leave means time to recover from demanding work. Time to return home. Time to be present with family.

A member of the **Branch Executive Committee (BEC)** listened to members' concerns and refused to sign a measure that would take away field staff's ability to go on their annual leave.

The executive was removed from office and replaced.

A representative had listened to the people he represented, taken their welfare concerns seriously and refused to endorse a measure he could not support.

His removal raises a fundamental question about representation:

What freedom does an elected official have to defend members if doing so puts that official's position at risk?

Members need representatives who can bring difficult concerns into the room and insist that they receive a hearing. That responsibility becomes especially important when the decision under consideration affects workers' rest, wellbeing and family life.

The suspensions remain. So do the questions.

Affected members remain suspended. Removed officials remain out of office. The branch continues to live with the consequences.

For those directly affected, these decisions have interrupted their participation and service within the union. For everyone else, they have shaped expectations about what happens when members question authority.

PENGASSAN must explain the basis for these actions.

What offences justified the indefinite suspensions? Which constitutional provisions authorised the removals? When were the affected officials given an opportunity to defend themselves? What process governed their replacements? Why was a representative removed after refusing to endorse the annual leave measure?

Members deserve clear answers supported by the decisions, records and procedures applied.

An indefinite suspension should not come with an indefinite wait for an explanation.

What happens in one branch matters to every branch.

The TotalEnergies experience reaches beyond the individuals directly affected.

Every member who has ever wanted to question a decision has a stake in it. Every elected official expected to defend workers' welfare has a stake in it. Every Congress that expects its voice to carry meaning has a stake in it.

A union depends on members being willing to participate. That willingness grows when leaders listen, explain their decisions and respect the people who entrusted them with office.

It weakens when members begin to measure a question against the punishment it might attract.

Distinguished Comrades, our dues sustain the union. Our votes give representatives their mandate. Our participation gives Congress its strength.

We must be able to ask questions. We must be able to defend our welfare. We must be able to demand an explanation when elected leaders are removed.

The TotalEnergies branch experience demands answers, accountability and a fair resolution for the affected comrades.

The members are still waiting.

Our Dues. Our Say. Our Vote!

SAVE THE UNION
The union belongs to its members.