

**Report of the Executive Council
of the
Barbados Secondary Teachers' Union**



"Patrick Frost Centre"
8th Avenue Belleville, St. Michael
Barbados
Tel: 429-7676

April 1st 2009 - March 31st 2010

BARBADOS SECONDARY TEACHERS' UNION

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

1st April 2009 to 31st March 2010

This report summarises the activities of the BSTU during the past year relative to its core mandate to provide strong representation of its members and to be an active participant in industrial relations activity at the national level. We must now take stock of what has been achieved and attempt to prioritise our various issues and endeavours so as to take into the new year an effective programme towards achieving our desired outcomes. The year under review will demonstrate that the work of the Union is becoming more difficult given the limited financial and human resources available to us to carry out our increasingly demanding duties and to ensure the proper functioning of the organisation and the implementation of proposed plans. Such challenges must be the focus of the incoming executive in a year that will be pivotal to our growth and development.

As at 31st March 2010 membership in the Union stood at **432**. The breakdown is as follows:

Honorary life Members -

Life Members -2

Retired Members -66

Ordinary Members in schools/educational institutions - 363

Ordinary Members- on no pay leave/secondment – 1

During the past year there were 9 retirees.

The number of meetings held during the year are as follows:

Executive Council Meetings 1

Extraordinary General Meetings 1

Officers Meetings 1

New Executive

A new Executive was elected at our Annual General Meeting on March 31st 2009 at Queens College. Changes in the Executive were reflected by: Sis. Mona Robinson replacing Bro. Melza Archibald as 1st Vice President, Bro. Wismar Gibson replacing Sis. Leila Lorde as 2nd Vice President, Bro. Albert Bartlett replacing Sis. Linda Bowen. All other members were returned unopposed. The new Executive was as follows:

President:	Sis. Mary Anne Redman (The Lodge School)
1 st Vice President:	Sis. Mona Robison (Christ Church Foundation)
2 nd Vice President:	Bro. Wismar Gibson (Lester Vaughn)
3 rd Vice President:	Bro. Albert Bartlett (Christ Church Foundation School)
General Secretary:	Bro. Erskine Padmore (The Lodge School)

Deputy General Secretary: Bro. Frank Archer (The Lodge School)
Treasurer: Sis. Mary Burnett (Coleridge & Parry)
Public Relations Officer: Sis. Cheryl Brathwaite (The St. Michael School)

During the year under review the 2nd Vice President vacated his position without formal notification of such.

TRUSTEES

The trustees for the period were Dame Patricia Symmonds, Br. John Blackman

AUDITORS

W.F.D Maxwell & Co. Ltd had been retained as auditors for the Union.

BANKERS

CIBC remains as the official bankers of the Union.

LEGAL REPRESENTATIVES

No legal services were retained during the period

UNION HEADQUARTERS

Our headquarters have finally been repaired. Our building is now much more accommodating and appealing both internally and externally. Repair costs were relatively high since, given the age of the building, there were many unforeseen structural problems that could not be ignored. Our aim now is to make the building a place for more social activities that foster ready identification with and support of union activities.

WEBSITE

The Executive continues to function with Bro. James Carmichael as webmaster. We continued to improve the site. There is now a question and answer link for members who have any queries for the union.

UNION ACTIVITIES

1. Teachers' Professional Day (TPD)

The Union staged another successful seminar under the theme of World Teachers' Day: "Build the Future- Invest in teachers now!" Mr. Edouardo Ali (Campus Quality Coordinator-UWI, Cave Hill) and Mrs. Virginia Albert-Poyote (Education International {EI} Regional Co-ordinator) were the presenters for the day.

Mr. Ali spoke on the topic **“The Inclusion of the contributions of Teachers and their Professional Associations in developing Education Policy and ensuring Quality in Education: Implications for investing in the future.”** He made the points that:

- Unions should build a cadre of professionals and must also understand the value that teachers have within the context of the Caribbean identity;
- Educational systems must embrace and ensure quality assurance in classrooms since there has been an increase in the number of institutions offering early childhood education and universal primary education across the region;
- Policymaking must be firmly grounded in a cultural context;
- Policymaking must be seen both as a policy and a discourse, and teachers must become stronger advocates for policy reform;
- Teachers should use the TPD as a forum for presenting their own research and sharing experiences with their colleagues;
- Teachers through their Union should seek to engage policy makers – it is necessary to form professional relationships close to the seat of power;
- Teachers should engage in meaningful discourse, share practices and use every opportunity to promote their views;
- Political entities must know that unions are not partisan, not self serving, but that they have long term goals and which are geared towards the interests of teachers and students;
- Unions must demonstrate foresight and not project themselves primarily as collective bargaining agents;
- The BSTU must seek to engage in structured dialogue with the Ministry of Education doing research, proposing policy, etc
- Quality in education focuses on the issues of learning outcomes and examines whether these learning outcomes are met;
- UWI Cave Hill would be willing to work with the BSTU as they seek to promote quality enhancement via the following strategies:

-Leadership development training which benefits the school system, training in Educational Administration Courses dealing with Quality Enhancement Procedures

-Research and training in Quality Systems using seminars, workshops and the establishment of research communities

-Negotiating Quality Education policy in Barbados such as funding school initiatives based on achievement and establishing memoranda of agreement with organisations

She indicated the need for us to rethink the role of the BSTU, strategically repositioning ourselves to be the catalyst in this stage of educational history in Barbados, choosing one or two areas for change, and developing a sound strategic plan.

Mrs. Virginia Albert-Poyote presented an interactive session on the theme: **“Build the Future: Invest in Teachers now”**. Ms Poyote started by urging members to dispel any rumour that BSTU was on the “verge of extinction”, and applauded those present for their show of courage and solidarity in coming out to support the Union’s TPD activity in the midst of what she perceived to be attempts by others to undermine it.

She stressed that the true value of any discourse was to be measured by what the listener gleaned and was able to take away with him, putting it to further use. She commended the leaders of BSTU for continuing to propel change within the local context as well as within the CUT.

She reminded those present that all good teachers' trade unions are able to strike a balance between the roles of Trade Unionists and professionals, using herself as an example as she was once called on to seamlessly blend the roles of Principal of a school and President of the Teachers' Union in St Lucia. She expressed concern about the seeming "rift" between the two teachers' unions and urged listeners to keep the children's best interests foremost in their minds. Mrs Poyote acknowledged that Barbados has long been the flagship for sound education within the region, and urged that we not allow petty competition among professionals to tarnish this reputation.

The audience was encouraged to see money spent on education as an investment rather than as expenditure, and posited that such an investment was the best way to solve the global economic crisis, pointing out that Education was the cure to many of society's ills. Properly used, "education is a tool that can transform the world" she said. She urged those present to be aware of global change and its impact on the profession.

She posed three questions:

- How can Unions invest in teachers?
- How can Governments invest in teachers?
- How can teachers invest in themselves?

With respect to Unions' investment in its members, we were reminded that the BSTU was intimately aware of the needs both of the system and of its members. Ms. Poyote encouraged the Union to be active, proactive, aggressive and dynamic. Individually, members also needed to exhibit these qualities. She cautioned against complacency as educators, and reinforced the need to ensure that gains made were not reversed. It was advised that Unions form part of recruitment teams. Acknowledging that some teachers failed to develop as professionals, she admonished teachers to read and do their own research, and to refrain from blaming others for failing to provide opportunities for professional development.

When addressing the issue of the Government's investment in its teachers, Ms Poyote suggested that they provide support for professional growth, mobility and recognition. She reminded the audience that teacher expertise remains one of the most important factors in student achievement, and cautioned that the children we teach will feel the impact of a global economic crisis and more than ever now the teacher is often expected to compensate for the deficits in students' basic needs – eg. books, food, clothing, hygiene, etc. Moreover, many teachers themselves need financial literacy skills in order to manage in the current recession. Failure to do this will result in their being unable to deliver quality education. Governments must be cognizant of these factors and put measures in place to support the development of its teachers.

Finally, Ms Poyote proposed that teachers invest in themselves by securing any opportunity for professional growth. She encouraged teachers not to feed the fallacious notion that the older the student, the more valuable and prestigious the teacher, and advised the Unions to use a holistic approach to the system in order to tackle this problem, and to insist that teacher training must be equally available at all levels of education, since all teachers must be knowledgeable. She urged

teachers to listen to their consciences, and to be honest in their conduct and delivery, supporting each other and comporting themselves with integrity. Equally, she encouraged them to be critical thinkers, problem solvers and innovators. Most important, she strongly proposed that teachers must make time to support the organization which looks after their interests.

Ms Poyote strongly advised the BSTU to build active representation, especially in light of the fact that another union exists. She voiced the opinion that the Union's profile in the public eye must be seen as a force with which would be contenders must reckon, and cited the view of EI that the role of Trade Unions is pivotal to the solving of the global crisis. BSTU must inform the public of the Union's activities and urged members to be familiar with their union's goals and aspirations. She acknowledges that every member and officer of the union had a role to play, and likened these roles to Sharks (leaders) Horses (workers) and Sardines (rank and file members). The Union can only be successful if each group does its job.

After the presentations the members broke into work groups and their recommendations, along with those from the presenters will be formulated into a working paper for presentation to the Ministry of Education

At the end of the working session members retreated to Union headquarters for lunch.

2. Re-dedication of "Ryeburn"

After the renovations of our Union headquarters the Executive took the decision to re-dedicate and re-name the headquarters to honour Bro. Patrick Frost in recognition of his unequalled contribution to teacher trade unionism in Barbados. A ceremony was held on the afternoon of Saturday 3rd October, 2009 (Bro. Frost's birthday) and this brought together BSTU members, CTUSAB affiliate unions and other specially invited guests.

The simple but touching ceremony included the reading of the poem "IF" written by Rudyard Kipling by Sis. Mona Robinson (1st V.P.). Musical performances were given by Ms. Cassandra Greenidge, Master Rogé Padmore (student of The Lodge School) and Mr. Roger Gittens. Congratulatory correspondence was received from the General-Secretary of the BWU and the President of CTUSAB. These were read aloud to the audience.

A plaque was unveiled, by Bro. Patrick, at the entrance of the building which reads: **"This plaque was unveiled by Patrick Frost on 3rd Oct 2009 at the renaming and re-dedication ceremony of the BSTU HQ, in recognition of his untiring, selfless and consummate contribution to the labour movement, especially to teachers in Barbados."**

On the interior of the building Br. Frost also unveiled a bas-relief of himself done by Mr. Jason Hope. This was followed by his cutting of a large birthday cake, a dinner and much music and dancing. A good time was had by all and the building is now known as the **"Patrick Frost Centre"**.

GOVERNMENTAL AND OTHER AGENCIES

Ministry of Education (MOE)

1. Quarterly meetings

The long-awaited meeting with the Minister of Education finally took place one year and seven months after our written request. At the meeting a number of matters were submitted for discussion, some of these included:

1. Need for Industrial Relations training at all levels of the education system since the lack of knowledge, especially at the level of leadership in schools, is responsible for most of the problems experienced by our members in schools
2. Paid release for one union official
3. Teachers' Professional Day (TPD). The BSTU discussed the agreement reached as a result of two meetings called by the Chief Education Officer and the Permanent Secretary and the teachers' unions to reschedule the BSTU's TPD activity for World Teacher's Day. The Minister declared that he would not be supporting a second TPD day and therefore he was not willing to uphold the prior agreement reached between the BSTU and Ministry officials.
4. Establishment of a Teaching Service Commission. The BSTU reminded the Minister that this Union had been making the call for such a Commission since 1976.
5. Licensing of teachers. The BSTU pointed out that any such process required much consultation and discussion and that it could not be implemented in any ad hoc fashion. The Minister asked the BSTU to provide a working document on how we viewed an implementation process in relation to licensing.

Other items on the agenda which had to be rescheduled for a subsequent meeting include:

6. Structure and functioning of Boards of Management.
7. The organization of the CAPE programmes at the proposed new Sixth Form Schools.
8. The need for substitute teachers in the system.
9. The delay in appointments to teaching service.
10. Compensation for supervision, marking and data entry of CXC SBA's
11. Rationalisation and harmonisation of the policy on seniority in the service
12. Co-payment of medical insurance premiums for teachers
13. Establishment of health and safety committees in schools
14. The inclusion of Labour on the interviewing panel for posts of Principal and Deputy Principal in the service
15. Reduction in the eligibility requirements for long leave from fifteen years to seven years in the first instance.
16. Provision for the grant of personal leave to teachers.

The Minister promised to set up a follow-up meeting with the BSTU within four weeks but up until the present, and after having made enquires, we have not been invited to such.

An extremely busy schedule did not allow for the convening of the required number of quarterly meetings.

2. **Alexandra School**

The Ministry of Education (MOE) intervened in the Alexandra dispute and resulting industrial action by mandating that the Principal attend a meeting with the BSTU chaired by them. The first meeting set the parameters for the conduct of future meetings. There have been two meetings with the Principal, BSTU and the MOE thus far with others scheduled to follow in short order. [see details under school issues]

3. **National Advisory Committee on Education**

The President continues to sit on the NACE committee. After the various town hall meetings, focus group meetings, interviews and review of written submissions, the Committee's draft report has been prepared and is ready to be submitted to the Minister of Education for review.

WORKERS' ORGANISATIONS IN BARBADOS

1. **Congress of Trade Unions and Staff Associations of Barbados [CTUSAB]**

The BSTU continues to share the philosophy of a social partnership and to be a committed member of CTUSAB. We continue to ensure that we have a presence at all executive meetings and other activities of the organisation.

The Executive wishes to remind members that the following persons have been named CTUSAB representatives on the Boards of Management of the following schools:

Alleyne:	Eric Arthur
Alexandra:	Bro. David Giles
Christ Church Foundation:	Sis. Marguerite Cummins-Williams
Coleridge and Parry:	Bro. Morris Blenman
Combermere:	Bro. Roger Marville
Deighton Griffith:	Bro. Sydwyn Bayne
Harrison College:	Bro. Hal Gollop
Queens College:	Sis. Joan Kunar
The Lodge School:	Bro. Colin Norville
The St. Michael School:	Bro. John Blackman

CTUSAB Committees

Sister Mona Robinson accepted the invitation to sit on the National Committee for Monitoring the Rights of the Child. The Committee outlined the following as its aims:

- Influencing Government policy makers to put necessary systems in place
- To make a worthwhile contribution to the development of a National Policy on children and family
- To play the role of advocacy
- Collaborate with Non-Governmental Organisations.

The Committee is currently reviewing the Second Draft of Barbados' Second Report on the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In addition the Committee is

preparing a Proposal “Breaking the Silence”, which purports to explore the issue of bullying in our schools with a view to:

- Target both the perpetrators and the vulnerable
- Produce a document outlining the process, procedure and recourse for managing bullying in schools.
- Sensitise and train educators, police, PTAs and Prefect bodies on the issue of bullying and how to handle incidences of bullying
- Prepare orientation programs for transition from primary to secondary school and
- Develop a program to bring about behavioural changes.

Education and Training Committee

Our President, Sis. Mary-Anne Redman is Chairperson of this committee and with the assistance of recent subventions to CTUSAB by the government, training programmes are actively being organized for affiliates. Further, the committee has earmarked funding assistance for training within individual affiliates and three Unions thus far have applied for such assistance of which one is the BSTU. Our funding has been approved and our training programme, including the development of a strategic plan for the BSTU, will take place on 7th and 8th April, 2010.

NISE Week of Excellence

The Social Partners in association with The Productivity Council, Central Bank of Barbados, Office of Public Reform, Barbados Employers’ Confederation, Congress of Trade Unions & Staff Associations of Barbados, National Initiative for Service Excellence were the sponsors of the Week of Excellence which began with a church service at St. Barnabas Anglican Church on Sunday 21 February and ended with a street march on Saturday 27, 2010.

Bro. Frank Archer and Bro. Erskine Padmore attended the Tuesday 23rd February session in which Dr. Tayo Fashoyin, Director, Industrial & Employment Relations Department (ILO) gave the feature address entitled: "Partnering For Success". Mr Robert Morris, Deputy Gen. Secretary (BWU) facilitated an interactive session entitled "Strategic Planning - Emphasizing 'Teamness' as a tool for Improved Organizational Performance".

On Wednesday, 24 February Sis. Mona Robinson attended the session at the Barbados Workers’ Union Labour College. The proceedings were chaired by Mr. Shawn Callender of the Productivity council. Mr Ulric Sealy, Principal of the college began the day with an inspirational address. This was followed by a presentation on “*Getting the Best from Generation Xers in the Workplace*’.

Mrs. Charmaine Browne-Spencer, Consultant, outlined the characteristics of the different generations, the key motivators for these same generations and the negative and positive factors which impact them and affect their work performance. Having this knowledge allows businesses to develop performance appraisal systems, incentive schemes and training specifically geared to these individuals so as to enhance their productivity. The presentation was followed by an interactive discussion session. Mr. Michael Archer, Director of the Office of Public Sector Reform gave the closing remarks.

May Day Celebrations

Again last year the BSTU made a showing at the May Day walk and follow-up celebrations at Brown's Beach. We had about fifteen members who participated and we would want to encourage others to come out and increase the BSTU contingent at this very important and significant event for workers in Barbados. A **very good time** is usually had by all. This year there are special t-shirts/polo shirts that will be available for our members.

2. Social Partnership

The Public/Private Sector Consultation on Economic and Related issues was held at the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre 1st March 2010. The consultation focused on government's medium-term fiscal strategy. The plan is set within a framework that seeks to bring about improved revenue and expenditure management and institutional strengthening. The focus is to be on:

- Government revenues-improving efficiency of existing revenue collection
- Government expenditures- reducing spending
- Institutional capacity- accountability and improving management practices

In his reply Sir Roy Trotman drew attention to the similarity between a prior IMF proposal for Barbados and the medium-term fiscal strategy. He further indicated that he was opposed to and would resist any attempt at wage restraint.

3. Barbados Workers' Union

The BSTU maintains its good relations with the BWU and thanks them for allowing us the continual use of their facilities for our Teachers' Professional Day activity as well as for the various other types of support and resources that that Union readily shares with ours.

4. Barbados Institute of Management and Productivity

This year Bro. Albert Bartlett successfully completed the industrial relations course at BIMAP. The Union will continue to make funds available annually to train members in this area.

ORGANISATIONS OUTSIDE OF BARBADOS

1. Caribbean Union of Teachers

Executive Meetings

The BSTU was represented at CUT meetings held during the reporting period in Grenada and the Bahamas.

34th Biennial Conference (Grenada)

The conference was attended by Sis. Mary Ann Redman (President), Bro. Erskine Padmore (General Secretary) and Bro. Frank Archer (Dep. General Secretary) held on 26th July to 31st July 2009 in Grenada. Bro. Grafton Cobham seized the opportunity to travel with the delegates, as a

camp follower, thoroughly enjoying the activities organised for such persons as well as taking in some of the business sessions of the event.

The conference was held under the theme: '**Transforming today's classroom for tomorrow's world**'. Among the activities were three breakout sessions to obtain direct input from the delegates on topics related to the theme. Our delegation attended two sessions:

- a. The role of Trade Unions in the classroom (M Redman)
- b. The role of ICT in classroom transformation (F. Archer/ E. Padmore)

The conference address was delivered by Dennis Sinyolo, EI Senior Coordinator (Education and Employment). In his address he

- lamented reduction in teachers' salaries in some territories due to financial crisis
- warned member units to resist cuts in education budgets
- called for the removal of competition in education especially where this related to the concept of league tables or ranking of schools

In order to transform classrooms he recommended that one must:

- adopt reactive and proactive stances to educational policies
- build capacity for research and collective bargaining
- improve conditions of service for experienced teachers
- embrace technology
- be agents of change
- transform school leadership systems

In relation to the minutes of the prior biennial Conference in Trinidad (2007), the BSTU raised questions under 'matters arising'. Among those raised, the General Secretary queried the status of the issue of compensation for teachers for the supervision, marking and data-entry requirements of teachers involved SBAs at both the CXC CSEC and CAPE levels. He further queried the results of the survey among Caribbean teachers relative to their experience re: the fulfillment of the roles and responsibilities associated with the completion of such SBAs and the status of the committee that was proposed to chart the way forward in relation to compensation. It was revealed that only a few affiliates had actually returned the survey forms although many had voiced support for compensation. The BSTU President revealed that, although she had been recommended to head the committee, this was never formalized and that the names and contact information of the other committee members had never been forwarded to her. It was formalised that Sis. Redman would head the committee and she has since forwarded correspondence to the other two members of a new committee to address this vexing problem.

Elections

The following persons were elected as CUT officers for the biennium 2009-2011:

President: Rouston Job (TTUTA)
1st V President: Marvin Andall (GUT)
2nd V President: Karen Best (BUT)
3rd V President: Cecil Hodge (BVITU)
Trustee: Tyrone Molineaux (St Croix)
Trustee: Celia Nicholls (DAT)

Executive Meeting (Grenada)

Report on Haiti

The EI regional coordinator gave an update on the status of the major teachers' Union in Haiti and the difficulties that it endures. She revealed that:

- a new strategy must be developed to engage the union there
- the language barrier was one of the reasons that causes difficulties with the union's interaction and participation at the CUT level.

BSTU President Sis. Redman made the point that the CUT must use its internal resources in terms of the linguistic and interpretation abilities of its foreign language teachers to help non-Anglophone affiliates access, feel welcomed and make their input at CUT's meetings. She went on to say that the CUT should use its position to act in support of and actively assist Haitian teachers and their representative bodies. Further, and perhaps now prophetically, she stated that David Rudder's "Haiti I'm Sorry" truly symbolised much of the Caribbean's approach to Haiti and that the CUT cannot act in like manner but instead should provide proactive examples of co-operation that could perhaps shame Caribbean governments into some form of action in relation to our Caribbean sister island. She insisted that CUT assistance to Haitian teacher Trade Unions must be made a priority. A task force on Haiti was set up to assist the EI Regional Coordinator with Haiti. The members are:

M Redman BSTU
E Padmore BSTU
Julien Monroe SLTU
Celia Nicholas (Dominica)

BSTU's report to the Executive Meeting

The BSTU's report was delivered by the President in which she placed emphasis on the planning of the CUT's Educational Conference in December, 2008 in Barbados. She castigated CUT, as the regional body, for their role in relation to our exclusion from the hosting of the Education Conference and Executive meeting and their inclusion of a third party with the sponsorship and assistance of UNICEF in relation to the hosting of these events. The President stated that the CUT had a responsibility to ensure that both teacher Trade Unions were involved in these activities, especially since there had been a history of such co-operation in the hosting of prior events. The role of the BSTU was reduced to the extent of "welcome remarks" at the executive meeting, something of which the BSTU President had only been made aware on her arrival at said meeting. Sis. Redman pointed out that she had written the General-Secretary of the CUT and that the response received by the BSTU effectively constituted an insult since none of the pertinent

concerns was addressed. The BSTU President insisted that the number of territories with multiple units in the CUT was now growing and now amounted to four and that the CUT should not be forcing any territories to have only one Union, it should not be seen in any way to be encouraging discord among unions or denying teachers as workers their basic freedom of association, but that instead it should be formulating a rationalised approach that encourages co-operation among the legitimate unions who are affiliates of the CUT in relation to such multiple-union territories, especially when they seek to hold CUT events. Some persons, including the General-Secretary of the CUT initially tried to create the impression that the matter arose because of underlying problems between the BSTU and the BUT, but our President quickly and effectively corrected this attempt to distract from the real issue. The President later called for a meeting with the representatives from EI present at the conference and discussed the matter fully with them towards resolution. The Regional Co-ordinator undertook to address the matter further with the CUT executive.

BSTU's resolution

In an effort to avoid future procedural errors as it relates to hosting of activities in territories with multiple unions, the BSTU saw it necessary to table a resolution to give effect to the adoption of standards and guidelines of operations to ensure that such CUT affiliates are aware of, involved and participate in any local CUT activity. After lengthy debate the resolution was defeated 27-30 votes. It must be noted that quite a few delegates reserved their vote on this issue.

Of note however, we realise that the CUT has, more recently, been pro-active in attempting to avoid the mistakes of the past by seeking to implement a protocol, as the BSTU had called for, to deal with the communication and planning of CUT activities in countries where multiple units exist.

Executive Meeting (Bahamas)

President Mary Redman attended the meeting in the Bahamas. She reported that the BSTU and the BUT together have volunteered to host the next CUT Biennial in Barbados in summer, 2011.

Further, the EI Regional Co-ordinator called a meeting with the Haiti Task Force, which the President attended, to formulate an approach and plan of action in Haiti, including a trip to Haiti.

The President also reported that she had prepared a document and forwarded to the other two members of the CXC Compensation Committee and had recently received their feedback. She indicated to the General-Secretary of the CUT that a final version of the document would soon be received by him from her.

Education International

The Union endeavours to maintain close ties with this institution and to avail itself of the opportunities for training that it provided.

Sis. Mary-Anne Redman attended the North American/Caribbean Conference in Trinidad in February 24-26, 2010. The theme of the conference was "Educators Working Together for Quality Education in a time of Economic Challenge."

There were many presentations ranging from: Development Co-operation; Partnerships; Investing in Teachers and Education; The Importance of Research for teachers and their Unions; Gender Development in the Caribbean and Violence in Schools.

The General-Secretary of EI, Bro. Fred Van Leeuwen, gave a riveting presentation on “Educators Working Together for Quality Education in a Time of Economic Challenge”. The speech has been sent to our web-master for access on our web-site and should be available there.

Meetings were held with EI officials, representatives from the Canadian and North American Teachers’ Unions (CTF, NEA and AFT) and CUT’s Task Force on Haiti to address the immediate concerns of Haitian teachers after the earthquake. Plans were put in place to distribute some funds to each member of the CNEH and monies and other resources pledged to establish a new temporary headquarters for the Union as well as to provide basic amenities necessary for the Union’s work there, including a vehicle.

The President of the BSTU seconded a resolution from EI in relation to the provision of free education for Haitian children towards achievement of EFA and the Millennium Development Goals.

The BSTU was the only Union at the conference to propose a resolution to be carried to the EI World Congress in Capetown, South Africa in 2011. It spoke to the CUT taking a position to reject the introduction of any forms of performance-related pay for teachers in the region. The proposal was brought to the floor by the BSTU and there was unanimous agreement. EI officials will prepare it for presentation to the conference.

School Issues

1. Alexandra

This school remained the most problematic of our members’ institutions owing to the “management” style of the Principal and, the then, seeming unwillingness of some officials at the Ministry of Education to exert their supremacy of authority and mandate that he attend the meetings with the BSTU, Ministry of Education (MOE) and school’s Management Team. An understanding was reached on 23rd November, 2006 at a meeting under the chairmanship of the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education, as part of the resolution of the dispute at the Alexandra School, that there would be a separate and subsequent meeting to address the outstanding matters affecting the industrial relations climate at the school. The problems at that time too had also revolved around the Principal’s management style and unwillingness to follow through with agreements reached as part of a process of resolution.

The Principal’s position was one which demonstrated:

- that he felt that no-one at the MOE had the authority to summon him to a meeting
- that he refused to recognise the BSTU as the legitimate and recognised Trade Union of the teachers of the school
- that he refused to meet with such a legal, recognised and legitimate entity saying that he “would go to his grave first” before he met with the BSTU.

In so doing the Principal demonstrated a lack of respect for his staff and Ministry officials. He attempted to deny teachers the Constitutional right of workers to freedom of association and further, the right to be represented and to be heard in any matter by the trade union of their choice. These actions on his part had the potential to embarrass the Government of Barbados both internationally since, his actions were in direct contravention of ILO Convention 87 and 98, to which the Barbadian Government is a signatory and locally, as an agent of the Government as employer, bound by Protocol 5 of the Social Partnership, he has a responsibility to ensure best practice in industrial relations at the school. The Principal also demonstrated contempt for the BSTU.

In short, the Principal's actions, as an agent of the employer, constituted, inter alia, a breach of section 3 of the Second Schedule of the Public Service Act, a violation of ILO Convention 87 (Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise) and ILO Convention 98 (Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining), a deviation from established industrial relations custom and practice, and a failing under sections 10.5 and 10.6 (a) of Protocol V;

The BSTU also took issue with the handling of the whole situation by certain officials of the MOE. The office of the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education, as far as the BSTU is concerned, surrendered its position of supremacy of authority when it did not mandate the Principal to meet with the MOE, the BSTU and the Management Team of the school as had been agreed. The behaviour of the office of the Permanent Secretary demonstrated significant departures and omissions by the agents of the Government as employer in the particular case at the Alexandra School and, we are saying that, to that extent, the MOE is also responsible for causing the industrial action that the teachers were forced to take. The MOE must acknowledge that fact and take the accompanying responsibility for their role in the matter.

The combined actions of the Principal and the failure of the MOE to act resulted in industrial action by our members and others at the school which took the form of four all day meetings at the Patrick Frost Centre and one full day of strike action. All this covered a period from 10th December, 2009 to 5th January, 2010.

The BSTU records their appreciation of the efforts at mediation proposed and initiated by CTUSAB even though it was later not necessary to use the assistance offered. The last minute attempts of the Minister of Education via a press conference did nothing to advance the process or clarify the role of the MOE in the whole affair. It took a planned press conference by the BSTU and threats of ratcheted up industrial action to get the required response from the MOE guaranteeing us a meeting with the Principal in attendance.

There have, thus far, been two meetings towards resolution of this matter, with a **"LIVE PRINCIPAL"** in attendance, and there are more scheduled to occur. We must report that, until now, there is some measure of satisfaction with the progress we have made at the same. However, the BSTU remains of the view that the record towards resolution must show an examination of the facts, acceptance by the parties of the failings which occurred, an acknowledgement of what should have obtained, and a commitment to the provision of the means whereby the errors of judgement of the recent past would not be repeated in the futu

2. Combermere

Combermere presented the case of a newly assigned Head of Department (HOD) using his position to harass and bully, to differing degrees, two members of the BSTU. One member in particular was targeted more than the other. The actions of the Principal in failing to effectively address the situation and in supporting the behaviours of the Head of Department were demonstrated in him recommending that the member's position be advertised even though the matter had been referred to the MOE for resolution and was therefore under adjudication at the MOE.

Further, it culminated in the Principal signing a letter terminating our member's employment, something that he has no authority in law to do. Also, the letter of termination had no reason given for the termination, as required by ILO conventions, and the Principal had not been aware of the fact that our member had not even been given a contract of employment.

The above certainly did not portray the administration of the school in a positive light and our meeting with the Chief Education Officer on the matter has resolved the situation in our member's favour. He returns to the school next term.

3. Foundation

On a good note, two members of the school's ancillary staff who have been working for 10 -11 years without appointment, through initiatives taken by the Union, have been recommended for appointment.

The Union also represented our first Vice-President in an incident at the school whereby attempts were made to coerce her into a meeting, the actual reason for which had not been provided to her or relating correspondence made available to her. Sis. Robinson informed the Principal that she would settle her class and, as a mark of respect, return to his office, but reiterated that there could be no meeting. On questioning her she reminded the Principal that the attempt to have the meeting was a breach of Industrial Relations best practice and that she would leave and return to teaching, which was her major responsibility. In a meeting to settle this issue the Union expressed dissatisfaction with the way the entire matter was handled. The BSTU maintains that all Heads of Department must also, of necessity, be managers of personnel, and must therefore be capable of handling matters first at the Departmental level, rather than taking them to the Administration as a first resort. The BSTU was also concerned about the precedent set, by allowing students to change subject teachers, according to their whim and fancy, and not remain with their assigned teachers. Understandings reached at the meeting were that:

- a. The letters, bordering on defamation and based on hearsay, written by some students to the Principal, could not be used as negative comment in any situation within the school or otherwise.
- b. A further meeting would be held to discuss comments made by the Head of Department to Ms. Robinson, accusations leveled at Mrs. Lashley and Ms. Robinson, by a member of the Department and issues relating to Mrs. Lashley while she acted as Head of Department.

4. Lodge

The first issue at this school stemmed from the failure of administration to re-hire Bro. Wismar Gibson after a year at the institution. The argument in favour of the member was that, having responded to an advertisement for a permanent position and been interviewed and selected for the post, and given his continuous work experience in the teaching service viz the Public Service Act, he could not then be placed in a temporary position for one term. The BSTU wrote for and obtained a date for a meeting with the Board of Management only to be informed by the Chairman at said meeting, and via a letter written to him by Mr. Gibson, that he was retaining the representative services of the NUPW as his Union.

Another member, Ms. Beverley Gill, had what amounted to a negative report written on her by the Principal of the school and forwarded to the MOE. Certain attachments comprising the full Report were omitted from Ms. Gill's copy. This therefore denied her the right to the principles of natural justice by being able to effectively respond to the said report. Verbal attempts by the President to persuade the Principal to furnish Ms. Gill with the full set of said documents failed. The Union therefore had to write the PS, MOE on the matter. The union is still waiting for a response from the office of the P.S. and will very soon vigorously pursue this matter.

In the matter surrounding our member, Ms. Sharone Marvell, she had originally been denied Union representation at a meeting to deal with accusations against her which stated that she consistently absented herself from school during certain school days. The President wrote a letter to the Principal advising him of her right to such representation. A meeting was called at which she was afforded BSTU representation and the misinformation was clarified.

We are happy to report that the BSTU members of the support staff at the school, many of whom had been acting for long periods, have, after the Union's intervention, been recommended for permanent appointment.

5. Deighton Griffith

The Union represented Bro. Colvin Chase in a case that stemmed from an alleged breach of his responsibility in an incident in the Science lab.

Intervention by this Union ensured that the facts were known to all and that Bro. Chase was in no way negligent in his approach to dealing with the incident.

In resolution the Union left with assurances that: Bro. Chase did not have a negative report written against him; that the students responsible would be punished appropriately; that there would be a meeting with the Principal, students involved and Bro. Chase in relation to the incident and that any report emanating from the Principal on the matter would be copied to Bro. Chase as best practice dictates. Further, the Union expects, as an outcome of the meeting, that a clear safety policy for the labs would be instituted.

Condolences

The BSTU recognises the loss of Martina Alleyne, daughter of Mrs. Hazel Alleyne (Deighton Griffith); the Hon. Grace Thompson; Cecil Redman, the father of our President Sis. Mary-Anne Redman. The BSTU extends condolences to and offers prayers for the bereaved and their families.

Congratulations

Congrats to all our members who have completed their years of service to education in this country on a formal level. Our retiring members include:

Dr. Wendy Griffith-Watson (MOE)
Sis. Margot Clarke (Alexandra)
Bro. Victor Johnson (Alexandra)
Bro. Bruce Cosens (Foundation)
Sis. Lorna Ward (Foundation)
Sis. Cynthia Howard (Queens)
Bro. Douglas Corbin (Ellerslie)
Sis. Jackie Skeete (The Lodge)
Sis. Meta Nurse-Reifer (Combermere)

The Officers and Executive of the BSTU wish them all the very best as they move into a new, well-deserved and rewarding phase of their lives.

The BSTU also takes this opportunity to congratulate all our members who have completed various professional development programmes including the Diploma in Education and the Certificate in Educational Management and Administration and various Bachelors, Masters and other programmes.

Donations

The Union gave a donation of \$250.00 to Dame Patricia Symmonds as is our custom in relation to members actively involved in publication. Dame Patricia Generously donated a copy of her publication to the BSTU.

Thanks

The Executive acknowledges the special efforts of its retired members during the last year and wishes to thank all those who willingly facilitated the success of the Teachers' Professional Day, 2009. Our retired members also formed an energetic and enthusiastic segment of the audience. They continue to support AGMs and all our activities. The Executive is grateful to them for the continued interest in the development of the union.

The Executive records its thanks to all those persons who serve on Boards of Management as CTUSAB's representatives.

Thanks are also extended to members of the Executive, ordinary members and other persons and organisations that have assisted in any way with the programmes and work of the Union during the year.

The Executive acknowledges with thanks receipt of the following publications during the period under review:

Tutor (Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers' Association), *Monthly Monitor* and other publications (EI), *Today* (NEA), *The Courier* (Commission of the European Communities), Statistical Reports of the Central Bank of Barbados, *Digest of Statistics* and other publications (Ministry of Labour), the publications of the Office of Public Sector Reform, several UNICEF publications, *L'US* (SNES), *Pour* (FSU), publications forwarded by the Embassy of the People's Republic of China, the National Tertiary Education Union (Australia), and some miscellaneous reports and periodicals from other agencies and organisations.

3. The Media

The Executive thanks those who work for the various sections of the media for their enquiries and continuous interest in the period under review.

Conclusion

A review of this document forcibly indicates the quantity of work with which this Union increasingly finds itself saddled, on an on-going basis. The Union is not an entity in itself but is comprised of its members. Some officers, since the work is unequally distributed and performed by only SOME officers, are having to take on more and more work, along with their own professional and familial responsibilities to fulfil these ever-increasing demands. It is imperative for the continued, effective functioning of this institution that members be serious and clear about the level of work, commitment and sacrifice involved to keep the BSTU functioning at the plane and with the intensity to which we have all been accustomed.

It is time that persons recognise the threats to their professional well-being in the workplace and take the decision to do something about it by working with and strengthening their Union, not only by supporting Union-sponsored events and activities, but by actively recruiting new members and volunteering their skills, time and services for the betterment of themselves, their colleagues and their profession in this country.

An analysis of the cases that we have fought, as well as of other incidents known to you in your respective workplaces and those of your colleagues, clearly demonstrates that we are experiencing a deterioration in the standards of Industrial Relations best practice in many schools. The constant calls of this Union for Industrial Relations training for Principals, Boards of Management, Secretary-Treasurers and Ministry Officials, as well as the introduction of a bona fide component in IR at both the Cert. Ed and Dip. Ed levels, continues to fall on deaf ears to the detriment of our members and the increased work load of the Union.

Our shop-stewards too need to take their responsibility more seriously, attend executive meetings, ventilate the concerns of our members in their schools and seek advice on how to deal with situations so as to avoid their escalation. They must make use of opportunities for training to better equip themselves and boost their knowledge, skills and confidence and be seen as competent in doing the Union's work.

The rights for which we have fought and which teachers all enjoy, the gains which we have made need our constant policing and vigilance to ensure their continued existence and application.

There is much work to be done your Union needs you it has always worked for you ... now is your time to work for it!