



Newsletter

Globalisation and Trade Unionism

The following articles are extracts of the Institute's ed. book 'Globalization, Economic Change and the Challenges of Caribbean Trade Unionism', Trade Union Education Institute, University Printers, Jamaica, W.I (1998). Both articles speak to the stark situation facing Caribbean countries because of globalization, and the imperative for trade unions to transform their approach to secure the well being of workers. Copies of the book are on sale at the Institute at Ja\$1,200.00/copy. For further information please contact the listed numbers or email address.

The Uncertain Future for Workers

*Marva A. Phillips, Staff Tutor in Labour Education
Trade Union Education Institute*

Workers in the Caribbean face a rapidly changing present and an unpredictable future. Changes in the international economy are affecting regional economies more quickly and more severely than at any other time in our history. For the last 50 years workers have played a role in the development of their economies. In the process workers have acquired certain rights and a well-defined place in the social structure. Contemporary economic forces however are forcing a rethinking of labour role and position. The economic changes taking place globally, regionally and being reflected in individual nation states are of such massive proportions. These changes are driven by the interests of capital and much of their impact is detrimental to the interests of workers unless unions and their membership find a way to par-

ticipate in the management and control of these processes. Unions must realize that business cannot go on as usual. Important changes must be made in their operating strategies. They need to be transformed to a point much different from how they are seen today, if workers are to fare the current changes. □

Globalization and the Labour Movement

Comments from Professor Anthony Bogues

Extract from the ed. book 'Globalization, Economic Change and the Challenges of Caribbean Trade Unionism'

The trade union movement was born in this region in the early 20th century as a instrument of equality. The planter class in the early 1900's did not treat the newly freed ex-slaves with respect and equality. The strikes and rebellions of the 1930's were not only anti-colonial but were about equality. Over the years the trade union movement has perceived this task of equality as fighting for wages, better working conditions, benefits, arguing against unfair dismissal and a range of rights which would enable the working class to be treated with what one may call some amount of justice. The movement has not thought that it was important for us to examine economic policy, or to see how we

could influence decisions at the workplace. Over time our perspective has become a defensive one. At the same time given the links between the political parties and the union movement, we traditionally depended upon the political party to make sure that our interests were represented in the political system.

While all of this has its place, today given the nature of the problems we face and given the context of globalization we have to find ways to ensure that we are able to properly represent workers. The restructuring of the global economic system means we have to restructure the labour movement to meet the new challenges.

I would like to suggest the following areas for consideration in the restructuring. First, I think and this might sound simple but it is of extraordinary importance there has got to be a way of ending the competition between unions. In other words we have to develop a programme of unity at two levels; first, at the local level and then to develop a programme of common understanding and approaches at the regional level. The second element is to recognize that the ways in which we fight are in some instances outdated. Let me give an example. If a factory is being downsized or is being privatized we react to this sometimes as only a matter of saving jobs. This is necessary, but sometimes, indeed many times we have fought and won nothing. Should we not develop a new approach

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many times we have fought and won nothing. Should we not develop a new approach which incorporates the old but allows us to develop new positions? What should these new positions be? Can we but out a factory or enterprise and run it as a worker owned ESOP company? Can we influence the sale or divestment to individuals or entities which would be more productive than the previous owners but maintain some level of worker involvement? For this to be done we need to develop instruments and organs of the union which will allow us to examine economic policy and help us make decisions. The labour movement, therefore, has to have a strategic vision about where it wishes to go in this new period. However, I wish to make it clear that no new vision can emerge from anywhere else other than the union movement itself. □



Zenaida Moya - Mayor of Belize City

Ms Marva Phiillips and Mrs Jane Bennett of the School of Continuing

Studies, Belize met with Ms Moya along with her Director of HR, Mr Dale Trujeque in February of this year on her visit to Belize to promote the offering of the Certificate in Labour Studies through institutions there.

Ms Moya's response to the programme was extremely positive; it is her view that the programme is timely and that the University should make every effort to bring it on board. She is also willing to participate as a guest Lecturer within the programme. This offer is welcomed by UWI representatives as Ms Moya is knowledgeable in the field of Industrial Relations as a past Trade Union Leader and a Senior Manager in various government departments.

The Sir Frank Walcott Symposium

The Hugh Lawson Shearer Trade Union Education Institute and the Barbados Workers Union are jointly hosting a symposium on the life and work of Sir Frank Walcott: Celebrating a Trade Union Legend on September 16 – 18 2007!!! The call for papers has been issued. The deadline for the submission of abstracts is May 15, 2007. All interested parties are asked to submit their abstracts to Mr. Ian Austin email: ian.austin@cavehill.uwi.edu, Dr. Noel Cowell email: noel.cowell@uwimona.edu.jm or Dr. Steve Weaver email: steve.weaver@uwimona.edu.jm, Ms. Marva Phillips email: marva.phillips@uwimona.edu.jm

Venue: Solidarity House, Bridgetown, Barbados, West Indies

Perspectives on the conference theme may include but not limited to:

- Labour and employment relations
- Trade union history and development
- Labour Education
- Leadership
- Politics and Governance

Abstracts/proposals..... May 15, 2007
 Acceptance decision on abstracts..... June 8, 2007
 Paper Submission Deadline..... July 30, 2007
 Visit <http://www.uwi.edu/scs/Default.aspx> for further details.

Workers Bulletin !!!

Are you employed in any of these industries?

Banking	Bauxite and Alumina
Marine	Public Transportation
Sugar	Banana
Telephone Services	Tourism

Are you anticipating industrial action? If you are, then it would be prudent to examine the amendments of the Labour Relations and Industrial Disputes Act 1975 under section 5 B. and the Fifth Schedule for more details.

This amendment makes it mandatory for employees anticipating industrial action to inform the Minister of Labour and the management of the respective organisation within 72 hours of taking such an action. This should be done by written correspondence. Failure to inform the Minister and management in the specified time will render the subsequent industrial action **unlawful**.

For further information or queries, read the LRIDA and ask your union representatives for more guidelines related to this amendment.

Be proactive, know your rights!

Contributed by Clayson Panton (B.I.T.U)