



TRADE UNIONS CONFER ON ROAD MAP

Trade Union leaders, delegates, representatives of the social partners, academics and graduate students met on Thursday, May 26 and Friday May 27, 2011 to discuss the future of the trade union movement and devise a road map for its sustainability.

The conference revolved around three thematic workshops which explored several areas of importance to trade union development and adopted some cross-cutting themes for its deliberations.

The two-day Conference dubbed “**A Road Map for Trade Unions: Relevance and Sustainability**” was held at the Mona Visitors’ Lodge and Conference Centre, Mona Campus. The workshops, which followed the official opening of the Conference, examined the following themes: Gender, Youth and Leadership which focused on discussing strategies to bring more young workers into the mainstream of trade union organization and how to ensure that there is adequate gender balance and particularly to have more women in positions of leadership within the movement.

Participants at the workshop, which was facilitated by FES Director Judith Wedderburn, noted that there was a need for trade unions to pay special attention to targeting young workers, and to focus as well at the secondary and tertiary institutions in order to bring a deeper sense of awareness about the role of trade unions to those who are about to enter the world of work. The importance of engaging these workers through social networking was also emphasized. The matter of forming a youth arm of the trade union movement was also raised as a first step in that regard.

The second workshop was facilitated by Dr. Paulette Henry, Lecturer in the Department of Management Studies, UWI. This workshop focused on the Workplace Challenges facing Trade Unions in the 21st Century and the need to adopt different strategies for organizing, collective bargaining and grievance handling. Participants underscored the necessity for trade unions to recognize that the characteristics of the 21st workplace are: (i) knowledge-based, educated and young; (ii) performance driven, (iii) no job security, more contract employment; (iv) increasing entrepreneurship orientation.

The participants noted that trade unions must develop the programmatic platform to win the support of these workers and be able to present themselves as capable of representing their best interests. A level of sophistication must be shown that relies on the rigours of research and

The third workshop was facilitated by Lloyd Goodleigh, President of the Jamaica Confederation of Trade Unions. This workshop addressed the regional and global challenges in the 21st century, and pointed to the catalyst role trade unions must play in promoting equity, social justice and efficiency in the labour market. The participants spoke to the dominance of the neo-classical view of the world economy which isolated developing countries and place them at a disadvantage in terms of global competition.

Trade Unions must add their voices to the call for a strategic alliance with the BRICS countries and urged Caribbean government to accelerate the pace of regional economic integration by harmonizing laws, treaties and tax policies and promoting the free movement of labour. The workshop endorsed the need for greater social dialogue.

Head of the HLS Trade Union Education Institute, Danny Roberts said that a project management team will be established to implement a number of the recommendations, and that the Institute will draw from these recommendations to develop the relevant courses to be offered.



TRADE UNIONS' RELEVANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY—A GLOBAL VIEW

“Trade unions, worldwide, are experiencing difficulties on many counts in general and retention of quality membership in particular. There has been substantial erosion both in membership as well as bargaining power of unions. In order to remain relevant and effective too, unions in many competitive economies of the world are becoming “part of solution” rather than “part of the problem”. In such an environment, trade unions in India have also shown marked change in their approach and activities towards betterment of work culture vis-à-vis productivity.”

- *D. K. Srivastava, Trade Union Response to Declining Membership Base: Best Practices from Mumbai based Trade Unions.*

“The labour movement has a major role to play in sustainable development and participatory democracy. Trade unions as a large organized group in civil society can bring a unique contribution to the development community. They are directly involved with economic systems of production and distribution; they can influence the course and content of employment and social and economic policies; they are representative and accountable; they have considerable experience in organising the more vulnerable sections of society; and they have the experience and standing required to access national legal systems and public facilities. They can contribute through their long-standing relationships with such development institutions as: consumer co-operatives, housing societies, health funds and social security organizations.”

- *Trade Unions and Development, by Henk Thomas, Institute of Social Studies, the Hague Brighton, 1999.*

“Trade unions, explicitly or implicitly, have to answer three fundamental questions: whose interests they represent, which issues they embrace as relevant for the task of representation, and what methods and procedures they adopt in undertaking this task. Traditional answers to these questions have been challenged by the erosion of former models of solidarity, the increasing weight of competitive market forces, and the exhaustion of norms of egalitarianism. The author suggests new strategies for reviving trade unions' effectiveness as representative organisations.”

- *Trade Unions and Interest Representation in the context of Globalisation, Richard Hyman, University of Warwick, 1997*

“Europe’s workers are angry. You can see it on the streets of so many of our towns and cities from Athens to Copenhagen; from Madrid to Bucharest. They are angry because they are being made to pay for the greedy mistakes of others. They are angry at the hair-shirts they are told to wear while bank profits soar, bonuses are back, taxes remain unpaid by the wealthy...”

- *John Monks, General Secretary, ETUC*



HLSTUEI staff visit to the Shalom Basic School in August Town

Notices and Events

- Open Campus Forum on the Public Sector Transformation & the Outstanding 7% wage increase: June 15, 2011
- Delegates Development Initiative: Central Jamaica edition, June 21-22, 2011
- Social Networking Initiative for western Jamaica: July 2011

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