

THE FIGHT BY NEDCO WORKERS FOR JUSTICE

STANDING UP FOR WORKERS' RIGHTS



In recent times, the resilience of workers' rights has been put to the test within our beloved Trinidad and Tobago. The story of the 27 dedicated union members at NEDCO stands as a stark reminder of the ongoing struggle for fair treatment and respect in the workplace.

Labour Insight addresses the recent events surrounding the suspension of 27 of our members at the National Entrepreneurship Development Company Limited (NEDCO). Their suspension, due to expressing their legitimate grievances through peaceful protest, is not only unjust but also an affront to the fundamental rights of workers.

>> *Story continues on Page 8...*>>

Above: NEDCO Workers staging a lunchtime protest outside of their Company Headquarters in Port of Spain.

Below: At Left, NEDCO CEO, Calvin Maurice and at right, NEDCO Board Chairman, Clarry Benn.



JTUM REMOVES JASON BROWN FROM BOARDS

The Joint Trade Union Movement (JTUM) took decisive action on Thursday, April 11, 2024, removing Comrade Jason Brown as a representative on all previous Board appointments.

In 2023, Comrade Brown was appointed by the Government as a JTUM representative on the Board of Governors of the

[Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies \(CCLCS\)](#), as well as to the [National Productivity Council \(NPC\)](#). This decision reverses those appointments.

JTUM's decision sends a clear message that is prioritizes the interests of its members and the wider Trade Union Movement.

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INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS CORNER

The following are some highlights of the Negotiations and Settlements ongoing at the Branches of the Union. This list is not complete as the information for some branches were not available at the time.

PROPOSALS TO BE SUBMITTED

The Union is awaiting the submission of proposals from the following branches for review and onward submission to the employer:

- COPOS CREDIT UNION: 2023 - 2026**
- NEAL & MASSY (N) CREDIT UNION: 2023-2025**
- PECU CREDIT UNION: 2024-2026**
- REPUBLIC BANK (BU1&2): 2025-2028**
- SECU CREDIT UNION: 2024-2027**
- HAND ARNOLD CREDIT UNION: New Branch**
- AIRPORTS AUTHORITY CREDIT UNION: New Branch**

A number of branches also have Job Evaluation exercises ongoing:

- EXIMBANK: ongoing**
- GUARDIAN MEDIA LTD: ongoing**
- VENTURE CREDIT UNION: to commence**
- TRINIDAD BUILDING AND LOAN ASSOCIATION: ongoing**
- NEW INDIA ASSURANCE: Job Evaluation exercise completed in December 2023, inclusive of compensation rates and job classification grades, resulting in most workers receiving increases of 15% and upwards. New salaries effected in January 2024, along with retroactive payments for the period 2015 - 2023.**

IN PROGRESS

FIRST CITIZENS BANK: 2021-2023

Negotiations ongoing with Union aiming to conclude before Sept 2024

POLICE CREDIT UNION: 2022-2024

Proposals submitted and exchanged in 2023 for BU2, however, for BU1 the Credit Union has offered 3% compared to the Union's 9%.

RHAND CREDIT UNION: 2021-2023

Negotiations recently started for the expired period with the Union's 15% being countered by a 2% offer from the Society.

TRINIDAD EXPRESS NEWSPAPERS: 2019-2023; 2024-2026

Negotiations ongoing despite Company's paltry 3% offer over the 5-year period ('19-'23). Proposals for the 2nd period ('24-'26) were submitted in Jan '24, with no counter proposals received to date.

TRU VALU S/MKT T/A DOLLAR VALU SUPERMARKET SUPERVISORY & MONTHLY-PAID BU: 2024-2027

The Union has submitted proposals for both bargaining units (BUs) and got an agreement from the Company to commence negotiations in April 2024, despite not having submitting counter proposals.

TATECO CREDIT UNION: 2024-2026

Proposals were exchanged and negotiations are set to commence in May '24. Last negotiation secured an 8% increase in wages and COLA increased from \$450.00 to \$500.00.

REPORTED TO MINISTRY OF LABOUR

CCN/TV6 TELEVISION LTD: 2020-2024

A breakdown was reported to Ministry of Labour as the Union's revised proposals for the 5-yr period were met with a 2% counter.

WESTERN UNITED CREDIT UNION: 2024-2027

After submission of proposals in January '24 and a series of ineffective correspondence, it was reported as a breakdown to the Minister of Labour.

REPUBLIC BANK LIMITED - BU3 - TECHNICAL: 2021-2024

A breakdown in negotiations was reported to the Minister of Labour by the Bank, with three items outstanding: Salaries, Displacement and Overtime.

BU 1&2: A Trade Dispute was reported for Bank's failure to provide Uniforms for some 2000 female employees at the Bank.

REPORTED TO INDUSTRIAL COURT

EASTERN COMMERCIAL LANDS t/a TRU VALU:

The Union has filed a Trade Dispute against the Company for non-compliance with the 2016-2018 Memorandum of Agreement for Wage Increase. This arose over a discrepancy with an agreed \$2.00 increase for 2017.

EXPORTT COMPANY LIMITED: 2019-2023; 2024-2026

Breakdown referred to the ICTT and closing submissions are to be submitted upon review of a research note. The Union submitted proposals for the current period and are awaiting counter proposals

OSH AGENCY & AUTHORITY: 2018-2021; 2021-2024

For both periods a breakdown was reported to the Industrial Court with parties awaiting the first Judgment

NEWSDAY NEWSPAPERS: 2014-2017

Parties are presently before the Industrial Court, with Hearing date set for October 2024.

SETTLED

AV KNOWLES & CO: 2024 - 2027

Negotiations settled for the period with a 9% increase in wages.

BETHEL CREDIT UNION: 2024-2026

After 2 meetings, parties settled on a 6% increase for workers, with COLA increasing to \$260 over the period.

TRU VALU S/MKT T/A DOLLAR VALU SUPERMARKET WEEKLY-PAID BU: 2022-2025

Parties agreed to an increased COLA of \$130 and a 6% increase with a spread of 1-2-3.



TTMF IS NOW TTMB

Following the merger of Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance Ltd (TTMF) with the Home Mortgage Bank (HMB), TTMF will transition into the newly formed Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Bank Ltd (TTMB). This merger, which has been in progress for over a decade, was finalized on January 17, 2024.



CEO Robert Green of TTMF/TTMB has publicly assured all employees that no positions will be lost due to the merger. However, the Union, while not anticipating any negative repercussions, will now proceed to submit an application for successor company status as per section 48(1)(c) of the Industrial Relations Act. This application aims to ensure that the Union's Recognition Certificate No. 28 of 1976, currently held in the name of Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance Company Limited, will apply to the bargaining units.

As a state-sector company, it remains to be seen how this will improve outstanding negotiations as the 2020-2022 period is long overdue as the Company awaits its directives from the Chief Personnel Officer (CPO). The Union has since reported a breakdown to the Ministry of Labour.

NEW FACES AT BIGWU

We are thrilled to announce the newest additions to our BIGWU family, **Kerry-Ann Telesford** and **Geeta Ramsaran**.

Kerry-Ann Telesford, our vibrant new Receptionist, will be the friendly face greeting you at BIGWU's entrance. With her background at the St. Jude's Branch, Kerry-Ann brings a dedication to customer service that ensures every visitor feels valued and attended to.



Joining us as the Labour Relations Secretary, **Geeta Ramsaran** brings a wealth of experience from her time at the Eastern Credit Union. Her expertise in secretarial duties, coupled with a passion for organization, will be invaluable in empowering our Labour Relations Department to better serve our members' needs.



As we continue our journey of excellence in representation and support, we have full confidence that Kerry-Ann and Geeta will play pivotal roles. Please join us in extending a warm welcome to them and wishing them great success in their new positions.

BIGWU TURNS 50!!

On May 27, 2024, BIGWU will celebrate its 50th year since registering as a Trade Union.

Being registered in 1974, the celebrations will be held under the theme of **"Celebrating 50 years of Worker Solidarity: Honouring Our Past, Shaping Our Future"**. The activities would have began with the launching of the "BIGWU is Social" campaign, as well as the newly commissioned Anniversary Logo.



BIGWU is Social

Follow us for the latest updates, insights, and behind-the-scenes moments from your trusted Union representatives.

You can scan the QR Code for our linktr.ee or browse to our pages on the different applications below.

- www.bigwu.org
- [@bigwu868](https://www.facebook.com/bigwu868)
- [@bigwu_tt](https://www.instagram.com/bigwu_tt)
- [@BIGWU_TT](https://twitter.com/BIGWU_TT)
- [@bigwu.tt](https://www.tiktok.com/@bigwu.tt)
- [@banking-insurance-general-workers-union](https://www.linkedin.com/company/banking-insurance-general-workers-union)

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BASDEO PANDAY

A TRADE UNION TITAN



Basdeo Panday, a towering figure in Trinidad and Tobago's political landscape, emerges as more than just a politician when viewed through the lens of Trade Unionism. His legacy as a champion of workers' rights is deeply rooted in his transformative leadership within the All Trinidad Sugar and General Workers Trade Union (ATS&GWTU), in his participation in the United Labour Front (ULF), the formation of the United National Congress (UNC), as well as within his service as a Parliamentarian and several other fora.

With a background in law and a commitment to social justice, Panday's journey began in the late 1970s when he assumed leadership at the ATS&GWTU during a critical juncture in the union's history. He swiftly redefined the union's objectives, placing the empowerment of workers at the forefront of his agenda.

Under Panday's stewardship, the ATS&GWTU underwent a profound transformation. He recognized the need to democratize the Union, giving every member a voice in its decision-making processes. This inclusivity fostered a sense of ownership among workers, galvanizing their support for the Union's initiatives.

Panday's leadership was characterized by bold and strategic advocacy on behalf of workers. He fearlessly confronted management to secure better wages, improved working

conditions, and guaranteed employment for sugar workers at the then Caroni (1975) Limited. His negotiation skills and unwavering determination resulted in significant victories, including substantial wage increases and extended housing loans. By virtue of these accomplishments and improvements in the working conditions, workers were enabled to build better lives for themselves and their families.



ABOVE: Basdeo Panday and Comrade Michael Als seen exchanging greetings at a Trade Union Meeting



At Right: Trade Union Leaders marching down Frederick Street, Port of Spain in the late 1990s in a 'March Against Hunger' as they pass by the TELCO Offices opposite Knox Street. From left: Albert Aberdeen, TIWU President; Wade Mark - BIGWU Education Officer; Anthony Garcia, TTUTA President and other Leaders.





BASDEO PANDAY: A TRADE UNION TITAN

Beyond traditional labor disputes, Panday's vision extended to holistic community development. He spearheaded initiatives such as counseling centers, medical clinics, and food distribution programs, demonstrating a commitment to addressing broader social issues affecting workers and their communities.

Moreover, Panday understood the power of solidarity and collaboration. He played a pivotal role in fostering labor unity, bringing together diverse union leaders under the United Labour Front, amplifying the collective voice of workers and advocating for their rights on a national scale.

Panday's tenure as a trade union leader laid the foundation for his subsequent political career, where he continued to champion the cause of the working class as Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. His legacy as a trade union titan endures, serving as an inspiration for future generations of labor activists and reminding us of the transformative impact of dedicated leadership in advancing workers' rights and social justice.

May his legacy continue to inspire and empower workers in Trinidad and Tobago and beyond.



At Left: Basdeo Panday being greeted by school children and workers at the Annual Fyzabad Labour Day celebrations.

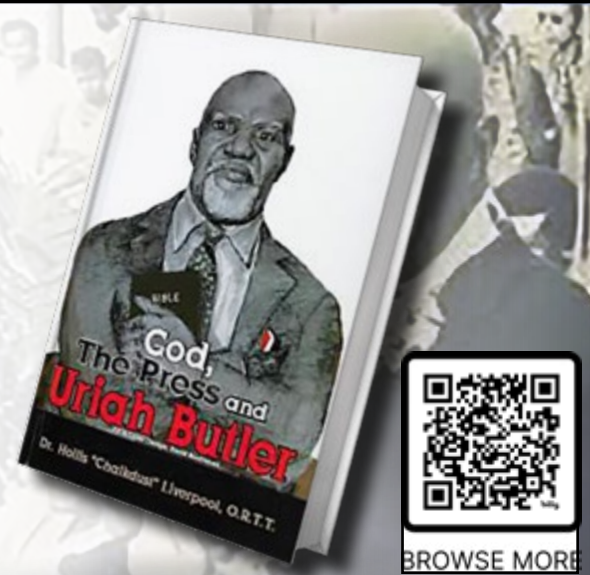


BOOK REVIEW

GOD, THE PRESS AND URIAH BUTLER DR. HOLLIS "CHALKDUST" LIVERPOOL, O.R.T.T

This book discusses the significant contribution of Tubal Uriah "Buzz" Butler to the Trade Union Movement and political landscape of Trinidad and Tobago. It recounts Butler's character as a fearless and uncompromising figure, who played a pivotal role in advocating for the rights of the working class and challenging colonial oppression.

Dr. Liverpool, in this book, highlights Butler's belief in fulfilling God's purpose and the inclusive approach he took towards the anti-colonial struggle, involving people of all creeds and races. He also captures Butler's influence as extending beyond Trinidad and Tobago, as he would have inspired the transition of trade unions into political parties throughout the Caribbean.



BROWSE MORE

UNVEILING THE TRUTH: STANDING STRONG WITH BIGWU

In recent months, the Central Executive of the Union has been confronted with misleading narratives circulating about our operations. It is imperative that we address these misconceptions to provide clarity and transparency for the benefit of Republic Bank Branch members and the wider Union membership.

CLAIMS OF FAILING TO MEET WITH BRANCH EXECUTIVE

On May 19, 2023, the RBL Branch Committee emailed Union President, Comrade Devenish, requesting a meeting on Saturday, May 20, 2023 to address some concerns about the Union's operations with him. In his reply, the branch was advised of his unavailability but he suggested meeting on Monday or Tuesday (May 22 & 23) adding that he was also willing to meet using Zoom for additional flexibility.



The branch committee did not accept the revised dates stating that they "no longer saw any need to meet with him given his imminent retirement at Age 65 this July 2023". This statement was later understood to be in alignment with the plans being put in motion to oust the President from Office.

MISCONDUCT OF CENTRAL EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

On June 16, 2023, Comrade Jason Brown deliberately and violently obstructed the President from carrying out his duty as provided for in the Union's Constitution.

Comrade Brown's violent and forceful actions included pushing a door with the intent to strike the President, as well as willfully obstructing him in performing his duties. Comrade Brown's aggressive attitude was so concerning that it had staff visibly shaken and required the intervention of the Police, who were contacted to de-escalate Brown's aggression and restore the peace.

INVESTIGATION AND DISCIPLINARY TRIBUNAL

The General Council having been made aware of the allegations and incident, met on July 6, 2023 and decided to suspend Comrades Brown, Baksh and others, pending the outcome of a comprehensive investigation. An independent investigation committee was then set up which was led by an external independent legal expert.

The investigation was concluded in October 2023, with the Committee's report confirming that there was sufficient evidence for the charges of gross misconduct against Comrades Brown and Baksh. The Committee also investigated the claims of intimidation, unethical conduct, and accounting impropriety made by Cdes Brown and Baksh, but they could not be substantiated.

The General Council convened an independent and external Disciplinary Tribunal which conducted hearings in keeping with the tenets of natural justice. Both Brown and Baksh attended with their individual lawyers where they presented their case, cross examined evidence, asked questions, and called any witness in pursuit of defending themselves. The Tribunal's verdict was delivered on March 1st 2024, finding both comrades guilty of Gross Misconduct. The General Council on March 13, 2024, having received all reports, engaged in mature deliberations and by a significant majority (FOR – 78; AGAINST – 0; ABSTAIN – 2) voted to dismiss Brown & Baksh from their positions and expel them from the Union.



So as the truth stands, Jason Brown and Nadine Baksh were not dismissed for questioning the Union's financial affairs, but rather gross misconduct as their actions were inimical to the Union's interests and undermined the trust and confidence of the Union.



UNION'S FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY

The Union's financial matters are handled with transparency and accountability. Our accounts are presented semi-annually to the General Council, with these financial reports, including management accounts and budget comparisons being consistently accepted. The 2023 management accounts, along with the 2024 Budget, were both accepted by the General Council in December 2023 and it should be noted that RBL Branch representatives, including Jason Thomas, were involved in this year's budget preparation.

RBL DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Our discussions with the Bank focused on safeguarding job security during digital transformation. To date, the Bank has assured us that no workers would lose their jobs due to these changes—this is a testament to the Union's dedication to protecting its members.

But that's not all! The Bank has also stated that the new digitalized operating system will not be vendor proprietary - relying heavily upon in-house talent for its operation and maintenance. This is a game-changer for workers, as it significantly increases our negotiating strength when it comes to bargaining for better compensation systems. We have a unique opportunity to leverage our position and demand fair

and equitable compensation for our Republic members which will result in better wages, improved benefits, and enhanced working conditions – all of which are essential for ensuring your well-being and prosperity in the #RepublicVerse, and moreso as the Bank has reported \$1 billion profit for the half-year ended March 31, 2024 (*Trinidad Express - April 30, 2024, Pg 10*).

YOUR UNION, YOUR VOICE

Recent actions by certain individuals, including encouraging RBL members to resign from the union, threaten our progress and collective bargaining power. We want to reassure each and every one of you that BIGWU is, and always will be, your voice in the workplace. We are here to represent your interests, protect your rights, and advocate for better working conditions on your behalf. Our Union is built on the principles of solidarity and collective action and along with all members this Union

GROSS MISCONDUCT



/grəʊs/ /mɪs 'kɒndʌkt/

Gross misconduct is behaviour which is so bad that the employer is entitled to dismiss straight away, involving a fundamental breach of contract, done deliberately and wilfully or through gross negligence. Sometimes it is a series of acts which together constitute a breach of the term of trust and confidence.

has achieved remarkable successes over the years.

Resigning from BIGWU should not be an option as it places you in a very disadvantageous position as you would have absolutely no recourse. The BIGWU is the exclusive bargaining body and your employer cannot enter into any kind of arrangement with any other person or Union. In fact, your resignation will only serve to weaken your ability to have effective representation.

By remaining united as BIGWU members, we can face challenges head-on and achieve remarkable victories for all workers. Let us continue to strive for a better future together.

SOLIDARITY FOREVER!

ALL ROADS LEAD
TO **FYZABAD** FOR
LABOUR DAY
19 JUNE 2024



THE FIGHT BY NEDCO WORKERS FOR JUSTICE

Story continues from Cover Page...

President of BIGWU, Comrade Devenish, highlighted that “the actions taken by the members of the NEDCO bargaining unit stemmed not from malice or insubordination, but from a deep-seated desire for fairness and justice”. He emphasized this while explaining that since 2014, salary increases approved by the Chief Personnel Officer (CPO) have been inexplicably denied to the workers. “Despite their patience and dedication,” he continued, “the Board, led by Clarry Benn, and Executive Management, led by CEO Calvin Maurice, have consistently disregarded the workers’ pleas, many of whom are women, thereby subjecting them to economic hardship and undue pressure.”

Labour Insight notes that BIGWU gained recognition for these workers in 2020 and initiated negotiations for a first Collective Agreement with the Company. Following months of negotiations, an agreement was reached on salary increases and backpay, which was accepted on February 15, 2024 by NEDCO’s Team. This agreement was further affirmed by executive management in their internal memo.



While at the Company’s internal strategic retreat on February 29th, 2024, it became evident to the workers that the Board had once again failed to ratify the agreed-upon salary increases. This prompted our members to exercise their right to freedom of expression, as provided for in Section 4(i) of the Trinidad and Tobago Constitution, with some workers peacefully displaying placards on their tables at the retreat, advocating for fairness and compassion. Albeit reluctantly, this ultimately compelled the Board to ratify the salary increases. Instead of acknowledging the workers’ valid concerns, however, the NEDCO Board contrary to the principles and practices of good industrial relations took punitive measures against the 27 workers, suspending them without pay for two weeks.

Management was clearly unconcerned with the fallout from these inflated ego-driven suspensions which apart from infringing on the workers’ constitutional rights, it also resulted in the closure of NEDCO’s central and southern branches for the same duration. This reckless display of power underscores



Notice posted on the NEDCO's Facebook Page on April 4, 2024.

a troubling trend of victimization for workers engaging in trade union activities.

In response to these unjust suspensions, BIGWU has taken swift action by referring the matter to the Industrial Court, seeking justice for the workers.

“We will not stand idly by while our members are unjustly penalized for exercising their constitutional rights,” said Comrade Devenish. “Our fight for justice at NEDCO is not just about these 27 individuals,” he reiterated, “but it is about upholding Freedom of Expression and the dignity and rights of all workers. We will continue to stand in solidarity with our members and fight for their rights.”

The NEDCO workers’ struggle is not just their own; it is a symbol of the broader challenges faced by workers across the country. It serves as a reminder of the importance of collective action and solidarity in the fight for fair treatment, respect, and justice in the workplace. As Trinidad and Tobago moves forward, it must ensure that the rights of workers are protected and respected, and that instances of injustice and victimization are met with swift and decisive action to prevent further erosion of workers’ rights and dignity.

The suspension of our members is a blatant violation of their rights. Freedom of expression and association are not mere privileges but fundamental liberties enshrined in our Constitution and international conventions. The Industrial Relations Act unequivocally protects the rights of workers to engage in legitimate trade union activities without fear of victimization.

I urge every member of our Union to stand united in solidarity with our brothers and sisters at NEDCO. Together, we will continue to champion the cause of workers’ rights, ensuring that justice prevails and dignity is restored.



BIGWU NETWORK MIXER

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

#IWD2024 #InspireInclusion

FRIDAY 8TH MARCH

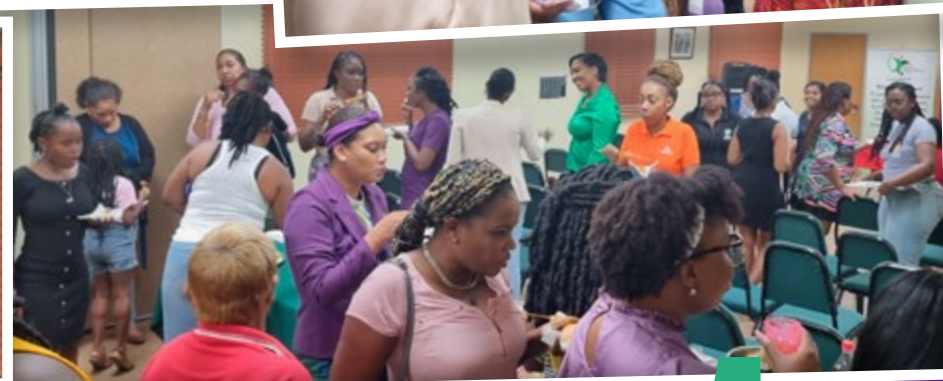
The BIGWU Women's Committee, in commemoration of International Women's Day 2024, hosted a Networking Mixer at the Union Office to mark the day.

The event was hosted under the theme of **#InspireInclusion** and fostered the empowerment and unity among women by showcasing female entrepreneurs who were making waves in their various professions/interest areas.

The formal segment of the event was tagged **#ShareHerJourney**, where invited speakers/entrepreneurs were asked to share some highlights, anecdotes, and learned wisdom. Speakers included: the founder of the Sister Bestie Network, **Toni Rae Britton**; Designer, **Isha Collins**; and entrepreneurs, **Shirnell Joseph** and **Peridot Webster**.

It was reassuring to note that while their narratives offered a glimpse into their experiences navigating the intricacies of their professions, it not only underscored the challenges faced by women but also highlighted their resilience and determination in breaking barriers and shattering stereotypes.

Approximately forty (40) female members of BIGWU and other female affiliates of the Joint Trade Union Movement (JTUM) were present, after which they were treated to some light refreshments and conversation. Attendees were also given tokens towards the recognition of World Down Syndrome Day - March 21, 2024 - and asked to submit photos which were placed on the Union's social media pages.



UNI TRAINING FOR BIGWU WOMEN & YOUTH



BIGWU is working with our International Affiliate - UNI Global Union - to strengthen our Youth and Women's Committees.

UNI Americas will host leadership workshops in July-August, led by Comrade Henry Olivera. Topics include organizational tools, equal opportunities training, identifying leaders, and laying the groundwork for new committees.

Come leh we go to TOBAGO

Eastern Credit Union

Aero Services Credit Union



Republic Bank - Store Bay

In January of this year, three (3) BIGWU representatives paid a quick visit to some of BIGWU's Tobago branches.

This visit was a quick meet and greet to show appreciation to our shop stewards and branch officers on the island, as well as deliver the Union's calendars/planners at some of the branches.

Making the trip were Comrades Janelle John, BIGWU 1st VP, and Melissa Aguilera Greig, Trustee, representing the Central Executive Committee, along with Comrade Chennel Cabrera, Labour Relations Officer.



EDUCATION PROGRAMME 2024 STARTS

"Empowering our Futures & Nurturing our Roots: 50 Years of Unity, Knowledge, and Progress"

The Union's Annual Education Programme is off to a running start for 2024, with some interesting topics such as Occupational Safety & Health, Collective Bargaining & Negotiations, and Labour Legislation, to name a few. We have classes in the week and a few Saturday Workshops as well.

It's not too late to sign up for a training session. Check the schedule and contact your Branch Education Secretary or Branch Secretary to register for any or all the remaining sessions in 2024.



From left: Cdes. Curtis, Esther and June (Works Credit Union Branch) reviewing Collective Agreements at a Saturday Session on Grievance Handling.

These sessions are so insightful that they reignite my passion as a branch officer. They also remind me of the need for collectivism and for workers to remember that it is worth the fight for the future of the working class.

Kristel Grant - Branch Education Secretary (NEDCO BRANCH)

Would you like to see the upcoming courses that you can sign up for, you can browse or click this link below:

<https://bit.ly/49skW9I>

or scan (or click) on the QR Code at right.



JTUM NATIONAL COSSABO

A Conference Of Shop Stewards and Branch Officers (COSSABO) is a meeting of the second-rank leadership of the Union or Movement, where discussions and debates on fundamental issues facing the Union and Trade Union Movement are conducted.

In January and March, the Leadership of the Joint Trade Union Movement (JTUM) called all member units to participate in two such Conferences to discuss some pertinent topics, among them:

- the state of the working class,
- the way forward for the Trade Union Movement,
- Strengthening the mass movement,
- and how to show politicians we mean business.

As General Elections 2025 draws nearer these may increase in frequency, so be prepared to attend a COSSABO here or there and let's participate in the Movement.



FB: @JTUM TT



CIVIL SOCIETY CRIME SUMMIT



The People's Roundtable hosted the Civil Society Crime Summit, themed "Power Growing From The Grassroots," on January 31, 2024, at the Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies (CCLCS). Moderated by David Abdullah, the Summit aimed to shift the narrative surrounding the increasing crime rate in Trinidad and Tobago.

Featuring a diverse array of speakers, including educators, activists, law enforcement professionals, and community leaders, the Summit emphasized the urgent need for



Above: David Abdullah (standing) delivering opening remarks at the Crime Summit - January 2024.

governance reforms and the disproportionate impact of crime on youth, businesses, and farmers.

Presenters underscored the importance of accountability and public intervention in combatting crime, advocating for holistic approaches, community empowerment, and systemic improvements in law enforcement and legal processes.

In the working groups, discussions were structured around a number of key of topics that included the education system and challenges to family life, and provided a platform for exploring the critical issues and collaboration needed in developing actionable solutions.

Reflecting on the insights gained from the Summit, it becomes clear that solidarity and collective efforts are essential in addressing crime and advancing social justice. As we move forward, our Unions need to continue to advocate for policies that prioritize the well-being and safety of workers and communities alike.

REGIONAL & INTERNATIONAL NEWS

ETUC REPORT: PAY STILL NOT KEEPING UP WITH PRICES

European workers continue to struggle with the lingering effects of a cost-of-living crisis, as highlighted in the recent Benchmarking Working Europe 2024 report by the European Trade Union Institute.

Despite a 0.7% decline in real compensation in 2023, corporate profits have surged, contributing to inflation. Urgent action is needed to address this disparity, with calls for expanding

collective bargaining rights, ending precarious work arrangements, and implementing fair taxation policies. ETUC General Secretary Esther Lynch emphasizes the importance of prioritizing workers' purchasing power to ensure both economic stability and individual well-being.

Ahead of the European elections, the ETUC urges its 45 million members to support parties committed to



empowering workers and advocating for fair pay increases.

Read More: <https://bit.ly/3vDSaF3>

STARBUCKS: NO UNION WORKERS AS TOP BARISTA

Starbucks has decided to exclude unionized stores from participating in its North America Barista Championship, sparking criticism and accusations of retaliation to unionisation across its stores.

The company's rationale is that participation is a workplace benefit and therefore subjected to bargaining.

Despite Starbucks' stance against



unions, the push for unionized stores persists among employees with actions such as this reinforcing the need for union representation.

Read More: <https://bit.ly/3vvE2O9>

GUYANA TEACHERS TAKE LEGAL ACTION AGAINST EDUCATION MINISTRY

GEORGETOWN, GUYANA: General Secretary of the Guyana Teachers' Union (GTU), Comrade Coretta McDonald, has announced the Union's plans to take legal action following the breakdown of collective bargaining talks with the Ministry of Education.

In response to the developments, McDonald highlighted the Union's engagement with teachers across the country, who expressed readiness for action. However, GTU Executives reminded them of the importance of following the legal process.

Before reiterating the GTU's lack of trust in conciliatory talks with the Ministry of Labour, McDonald outlined potential strike action options which include sit-ins, work-to-rule, and protests. This comes as the GTU is seeking a 25% salary increase for 2019 and a 20% wage hike for 2020 to 2023 for Guyana's teachers.

Read More: <https://bit.ly/43IpbN1>



ILO DEFINES THE CONCEPT OF A LIVING WAGE

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has recently defined the concept of a living wage, marking a significant step forward in ensuring fair compensation for workers globally. The agreement, ratified by the ILO's Governing Body, emphasizes the importance of decent wages in fostering economic and social development, reducing poverty and inequality, and promoting social justice.

The ILO living wage is now officially defined as the wage level necessary to provide a decent standard of living for workers and their families, tailored to local circumstances and calculated based on normal working hours. It is to be determined through transparent processes aligned with ILO principles on wage setting, utilizing evidence-based methodologies and consulting with relevant stakeholders.

Moving forward, Unions, along with the ILO, governments, employers' associations, and other stakeholders will have to engage in social dialogue, and advance collective bargaining to transition from minimum to living wages, while ensuring gender equality and non-discrimination.

Read More: <https://bit.ly/49pRAZs>