

BIGWU JOINS WITH TRADE UNIONS TO SAY "NO" TO CPO'S 4% OFFER



As negotiations with the Chief Personnel Officer (CPO) continues, the Joint Trade Union Federations made a massive showing in Port of Spain on Friday, August 12, 2022, as workers came out in their numbers to signal the "outright rejection" of the Government's four per cent wage increase offer.

With the major increases in the cost of living, Unions have outrightly stated that the current wage offer does not begin to make any sense as workers are enduring severe hardships in being able to put food on the table and making ends meet. ■



Above: BIGWU contingent at Joint Trade Union Federation March against Inequality in Port of Spain on August 12, 2022 as led by BIGWU General Secretary, Cde Trevor Johnson.

BIGWU EXECUTIVES TO FACE THE POLLS ON SEP. 7



BIGWU Election Supervisor, Comrade Hayden Bruce (standing), answering questions at the June 25th Special General Council meeting - TTMF Building, Port of Spain.

BIGWU's membership will go to the polls on September 7, 2022, to elect the Central Executive Officers who will form the leadership of the Union over the next four-year term, 2022 - 2026.

Nomination of former First Citizens Branch

Executive Member, Comrade Hayden Bruce, as Elections Supervisor, as well as his Elections Committee were accepted by the Union's General Council to ensure this democratic process is conducted transparently and in accordance with the Union's Constitution and Election rules. ■

FCIB BANK & UNION AGREE TO 14% WAGE INCREASE FOR WORKERS

(DETAILS ON PAGE 6)



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NEGOTIATIONS HIGHLIGHTS

The following updates cover the period July 2021 - June 2022 and outlines the activity at some of the Union's branches:

PROPOSALS TO BE SUBMITTED



- AIRPORT AUTHORITY CREDIT UNION: 2020 – 2022**
- AMGECU CREDIT UNION: 01/01/2023 –31/12/2025**
- GUARDIAN MEDIA: 01/01/2023 –31/12/2025**
- TATECO CREDIT UNION: 01/01/2024 –31/12/2026**

IN PROGRESS



- EXIM BANK: 01/01/2018 – 31/12/2020**
After the Court awarded 11% for 2015-2017, proposals for the new period were exchanged with bilateral discussions favorable thus far.
- FIRST CITIZENS BANK LIMITED: 01/01/2021 –31/12/2023**
Proposal for an 18% increase submitted, however, the Bank is awaiting direction from the Chief Personnel Officer (CPO) to start.
- EASTERN COMMERCIAL LANDS (Weekly Paid - BU): 01/01/2016 - 31/12/2018; 01/01/2019 - 31/12/2021**
The first period is before the Ministry of Labour & Industrial Court, with the Union awaiting counter proposals for the second period.
- ESTATE POLICE ASSOC.: 2013-2015; 2016-2018; 2019-2021**
In bilateral discussions the EPA has agreed to bring salaries up to market rates so negotiations can commence.

SETTLED



- WESTERN UNITED CREDIT UNION: 01/03/2021 - 29/02/2024**
Parties agreed to a 5% increase with COLA consolidation and increase to \$225.00.
- TRU VALU S/MARKET (T/A \$VALU): 03/01/2021 - 29/02/2024**
Supervisory & Monthly Paid BUs - In November 2021, parties agreed to a 6% wage increase, broken down as 2-2-2 for the period.
- FIRST CARIBBEAN INT'L BANK: 01/01/2021-31/12/2025**
Negotiations settled with a 14% increase (1¼-3-2¼-3-3½) for a five year period, inclusive of a \$100.00 increase in COLA.

REPORTED TO INDUSTRIAL COURT



- ST. JUDE'S SCHOOL FOR GIRLS: 2012-2015, 2015-2018, 2018-2021**
With three periods of negotiations outstanding, the Company has refused to come to the negotiations table to have bilateral discussion, hence this matter has been reported as a breakdown.
- OSH AUTHORITY & AGENCY: 01/01/2018 - 31/12/2020**
Initiated since 2019, this matter was reported as broken down to the Minister of Labour as the Company refused to submit counter proposals up until May 2021. Hearing is scheduled for October 11, 2022 at the Industrial Court.

JUDGMENT CORNER

RSBD No. 012 of 2018
- BIGWU v Trinidad & Tobago Cancer Society

In this 2020 Industrial Court judgment, the Court ruled in favor of the Union as it was determined that the Society's termination of Kimlin Harrilal, under the guise of redundancy, was not in accordance with the Retrenchment and Severance Benefit Act Ch 88:13 (RSBA) and contrary to the principles of good industrial relations.

According to the RSBA, retrenchment is "the termination of employment of a Worker at the initiative of the employer for the reason of redundancy". It requires the employer to (i) inform/give notice to the affected worker(s), (ii) provide reasons for the redundancy, and (iii) explain the criteria used in the selection of employees to be retrenched.

In summarily dismissing Cde Harrilal, who was at that time the Branch President, the Court found that the Employer would have:

- fundamentally breached the contract of employment by outsourcing her job function to an external agency before advising her of this,
- failed to inform or consult with either the worker and/or the Union on the planned retrenchment exercise, and

- committed an offence under the RSBA Section 14(1) in terminating employment without the 45 days period of notice, despite having made payment in lieu of notice.

The Court's ruling referenced the August 2005 International Finance Corporation of the World Bank Group, "Good Practice Note - Managing Retrenchment" as referenced in GSD TD 348/2014 BIGWU and Royal Bank, emphasizing that "without consultation, companies run the risk of not only getting key decisions wrong but also of breaching legal rules; and collective agreements and alienating workers and the community. Workers can often provide important insights and propose alternative ways of carrying out the process to minimize the impact on the workforce and the broader community".

In Cde Harrilal's defence, Cde. Jason Brown (BIGWU 2nd Vice-President) made the plea for her reinstatement, however, the Court instead opted for an award of damages in the sum of \$75,000.00. ■





After months of anticipation, 14 candidates would have presented themselves to be part of BIGWU's first-ever national elections in the history of the leadership of this Union.


Previously, Central Executive Committee Members were elected unopposed, however, on September 7, 2022, BIGWU's membership will have to elect the candidates who will lead the Union over the four (4) year period, 2022-2026.

Among the nominations accepted on July 5, 2022, six (6) outgoing Central Executive members are contesting the polls - two of whom have been at the leadership level of the Union since the 2002 merger.

There are two (2) slates/teams and one (1) independent candidate vying for the top leadership positions by canvassing the various branches of our 6000+ membership, both virtually and in person. Team logos, slogans and manifestos are circulated and are making their way around the over 70+ branch network.

As Election day draws nearer, it has been concluded that one position has already been declared. At the Special General Council meeting of July 19, 2022, Comrade Dasreal Arthur's nomination for 2nd Vice-President was found to not satisfy all the criteria set out in the Union's Constitution. Therefore the position of 2nd Vice-President will default to Comrade John Mark Lee Wah.





THE REFORMERS

Emmanuel
DOWNES
FOR DEPUTY PRESIDENT

Labour Insight believes that this reinforcement of the democratic principles of the Union is a positive sign and wishes all nominees the best in the upcoming polls. ■



EMPOWERMENTORS



Don
DEVENISH
FOR
BIGWU PRESIDENT



Jason
BROWN
FOR
DEPUTY PRESIDENT



Nadine
BAKSH
FOR
GENERAL SECRETARY



Janelle
JOHN
FOR FIRST (1ST)
VICE-PRESIDENT



Naresh
RAMPERSAD
FOR DEPUTY
GENERAL SECRETARY



Stacy-Ann
LEWIS
FOR ASSISTANT
GENERAL SECRETARY



TEAM PROGRESSIVE



Trevor
JOHNSON
FOR
BIGWU PRESIDENT



Charmaine
ALLEYNE
FOR
GENERAL SECRETARY



Wesley
FRANCIS
FOR FIRST (1ST)
VICE-PRESIDENT



Debbie
OTTLEY
FOR DEPUTY
GENERAL SECRETARY



John Mark
LEE WAH
FOR SECOND (2ND)
VICE-PRESIDENT



Mandy
CLARKE-WHITLEY
FOR ASSISTANT
GENERAL SECRETARY

Labour Day 2022

After the COVID-19 pandemic kept workers away from Fyzabad for the past two years, the Annual Labour Day Celebrations were well attended by BIGWU's membership.

This year, the Trade Union Movement commemorated the 85th Anniversary of the birth of Modern Trade Unionism, in a slightly modified format as per years gone by. The usual speeches from the Trade Union Leaders at the start of the day were omitted, with only 1 speech at Avocat Junction, lending itself to an earlier start to the day's events.

Under the banner of the "Unite to Fight" campaign, the Joint Trade Union Movement (JTUM) alongside the National Trade Union Centre (NATUC) joined forces in hosting the rally and included as many workers as possible. A simultaneous rally/march was also held in Tobago to accommodate workers on the island not having to journey to Trinidad to be a part of the event.

The Labour Day schedule began with the customary wreath-laying at the gravesite of Butler and La Brea Charles at the Fyzabad cemetery, with a short address around 9:00 am by NATUC representative and PSA President, Leroy Baptiste, at Avocat Junction. The march then journeyed to Charlie King Junction, followed by the Labour Day speech from OWTU and JTUM President, Cde. Ancel Roget. ■



⤴ At top, Trade Union Leaders observing a moment of silence at the gravesite of the Chief Servant, Uriah "Buzz" Butler, and below, at the headstone of La Brea Charles.



⤴ Above, Comrade Als (BIGWU Acting President)(at left) with comrades of the National Workers Union (NWU) in Fyzabad Junction. Seen here are Comrade Kangalee (at right) and two other NWU members.



⤴ At left, family member of Comrade Sonja Noray (Trustee) posing for a picture in front of the BIGWU banner at Avocat Junction before the start of the march.



Environmental Mgmt Authority (EMA) Workers posing for a photo for Labour Insight on Labour Day (June 19, 2022).



NEDCO branch members proudly displaying their placards lobbying for wage increases and calling for negotiations.



Tired from the heat of the day, a young and prospective BIGWU member takes a ride on his father's shoulders.



Comrade Onica La Rocque (ECL/Tru Valu Branch) chipping her way down to Charlie King Junction.



Cross section of BIGWU members all lined up as they approach the Labour Day Stage at Charlie King Junction, Fyzabad..

"So long I ain't see yuh!" - Pan-American Branch Members strike a pose on Labour Day 2022



Comrade Morgan Seecharan of the TTUTA Branch (far right) and his family, who he brought along to experience Labour Day celebrations.





BIGWU YOUTH SHINES AT CARIBBEAN YOUTH FORUM



Click IMAGE (above) to watch on Youtube

This year's Caribbean Youth for Innovation and Resilience (Youth FIRE) forum, initiated by the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) as part of its 52nd Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors, included for the first time, representation from the BIGWU Youth Committee.



This virtual forum was held on June 7, 2022, and featured youth and future leaders from across the region who addressed some of the more pressing concerns faced by the Caribbean's young people under two (2) identified thematic areas; Climate Change and Health, and Youth Employability: Skills for 21st Century Jobs.

BIGWU Youth Committee Member, Cde Tracy-Ann Ramkissoon (First Citizens Branch) was invited to moderate the panel discussion on Youth Employability, energetically managing the hour-long discussion in which panellists proffered answers to the questions of - What makes Caribbean youth attractive to employers? What do they need to secure a job?



Cde Tracy-Ann Ramkissoon poses for a photo after moderating the CDB Youth FIRE Virtual Forum - June 7, 2022

The panellists were able to correctly identify that the issue of youth employability is a global issue and the approach required speaking for

those most affected by the phenomenon. Instead of taking the usual approach of mentoring successful high school students or college students, Cde Ramkissoon ensured that they spoke to the root problems of vulnerable communities that hinder employability and have stopped many students from ever getting to the 'high school graduate' stage. In the next 15 years, or so, these students will comprise the majority of the workforce so it would be important to fix those issues to create equal footing.

In wrapping up the session, Panellist Keithlin Caroo (St. Lucia) who is the CEO of Helen's Daughters - a grassroots organisation that focuses on representation for women in agriculture - reminded the viewing audience that self-belief was a key component in really propelling Caribbean youth through the business world. She went on to say, "there's so much promise in the Caribbean region and there are so many problems, but we already have such innovative solutions, so it's a matter of picking up the mantle, believing in yourself and investing in yourself".

Although the preparation for the session was intense, Cde Tracy-Ann was really grateful for the opportunity to interact with all these regional youth and future leaders and we look forward to BIGWU's involvement being on an annual basis. ■



BIGWU SETTLES NEGOTIATIONS TO 2025 FOR CIBC/FIRST CARIBBEAN WORKERS WITH 14% INCREASE IN WAGES

Initially starting bilateral discussions with a 2% offer over the three-year period (2021-2023), Management at CIBC First Caribbean Int'l Bank concluded negotiations in August 2022 with the Union securing a whopping 14% increase (spread of 1¼-3-2¾-3-3½) in wages over the 5 year period ending December 2025.

Labour Relations Officer, Comrade Hayden Hernandez, was pleased to note that apart from the double-digit increase, the Union also successfully negotiated an increased Cost of Living Allowance (COLA), from \$250.00 to \$350.00 over the same period.

Cde Hernandez commented that "despite the talk about the depressed economy, etc., remember that banks are continuing to declare Billion dollar profits annually. Workers, particularly those in the banking sector, need to keep up the fight and not give up the struggle." ■

TRADE UNIONS UNITE - TO - FIGHT

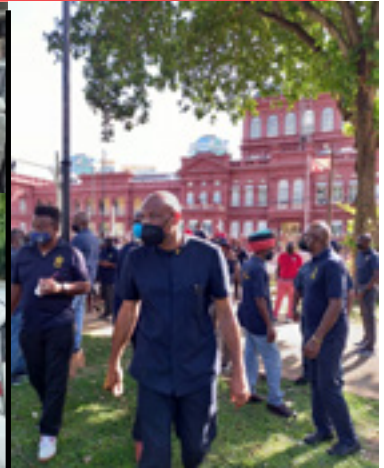


Since joining forces under the banner of "Unite to Fight", the three Trade Union Federations (JTUM, NATUC & FITUN) have continued mobilising around the issues which have been burdening workers since before the pandemic.

As public health restrictions have been relaxed, the Movement has organised motorcades, rallies and public protests/marches to galvanise and publicise the plight of workers to the national public, as well as a visit to the Office of the President of the Republic, for the delivery of the motion of no-confidence. ■



Above: Vehicles in Motorcade from Sangre Grande to Port of Spain - July 3, 2022



Above: JTUM President in Woodford Square June 24, 2022



Above (From Left): Comrades Devenish, Francis, and other BIGWU Members, at the delivery of the No-Confidence Motion to the President, Her Excellency Paula-Mae Weekes - June 24, 2022



Above: Trade Union Leaders recapping the events of the July 10 motorcade from Sangre Grande at the Queen's Park Savannah at the end of the July 10 Motorcade from Sangre Grande.

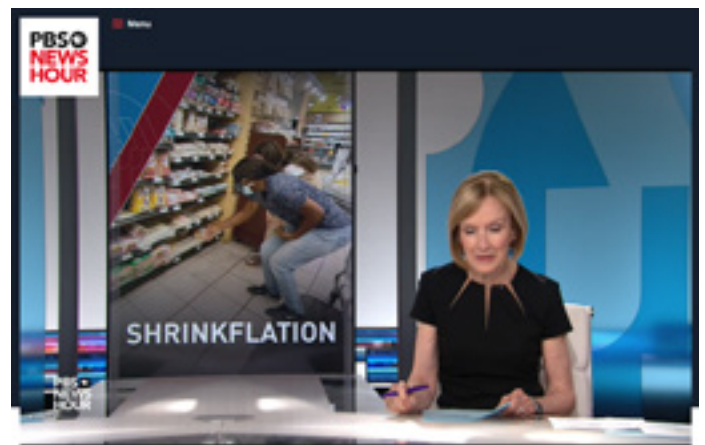
SHRINKFLATION? PAYING MORE FOR LESS

Finally, the truth! It's not only that we have been eating more as a result of the pandemic and being at home, but we are being made to pay more for less product.

Over the past two years, families, especially those with children, have been coping with higher grocery bills attributed to higher consumption. However, now we realise that as prices have been increasing, manufacturers and corporations have been marginally reducing the quantities of foodstuff being sold.

According to the [T&T Central Bank's latest monetary policy announcement](#), data to April 2022 shows foodstuff inflation "picked up to 8.7% from 7.9%, reflecting higher prices for rice, margarine, edible oils and meat."

In the PBS News Hour video report of July 29, 2022 (at right), economics correspondent, Paul Solman, uncovers just how manufacturers have been using 'shrinkflation' (and creative



marketing/packaging) to increase consumer costs and promote increased profitability.

This situation will not improve any time soon as, locally, our Minister of Trade and Industry, Mrs. Paula Gopee-Scoon, has gone on record to state that her Government will not engage in any pricing controls. She has instead opted to appeal to retailers to stop price gouging. ([Trinidad Guardian, Jun 23, 2022](#)). ■

REGIONAL & INTERNATIONAL NEWS

5TH FORUM OF UNI AMERICAS NEW WORLD OF WORK



Fortaleza, Brazil, The UNI Americas' 5th Forum of the New World of Work was held in Fortaleza on 27 June, 2022.

Trade Union leaders from throughout the Americas met in this forum to discuss the future of work and its impact on labour rights and the Trade Union Movement, especially in commerce and trade.

Taking the center of attention was the phenomenon of the "platformization" of jobs, which, although not exclusive to the region, has had a strong impact on the precariousness of working conditions.

BIGWU was represented by General Secretary and UNI Americas Regional Vice-President, Comrade Trevor Johnson, as well as Comrade Chennel Cabrera, titular member of the UNI Womens Committee.

Read More: <https://uniglobalunion.org/news/5th-forum-of-uni-americas-new-world-of-work/>

UPDATE: 4-DAY WORKWEEK TRIAL IN UNITED KINGDOM

For the past eight (8) weeks, thousands of workers in the United Kingdom have tested a four-day schedule — with no cut to their pay — that could help usher in a new era of work.



This trial was in response to workers who, having struggled more than two years into the pandemic, have expressed their feelings of being burnt out, have quit their jobs or are struggling to make ends meet as record inflation takes a huge bite out of their paychecks.

Read More: <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/08/01/business/4-day-work-week-uk-trial/index.html>

ONTARIO WORKERS WIN THE RIGHT TO DISCONNECT



As the boundaries between the home and "office" in this pandemic-driven era of working from home (WFH) have become increasingly blurred, a growing number of countries are establishing policies and legislation which empower workers to have the "right to disconnect" outside of working hours.

On June 2, Ontario (Canada) joined the list of jurisdictions that have struck a win for work-life balance, as this new law mandates that companies with more than 25 workers must craft a policy on employees disconnecting from work after hours. The legislation defines 'disconnecting from work' as "not engaging in work-related communications, including emails, telephone calls, video calls or the sending or reviewing of other messages, so as to be free from the performance of work."

The European Union (EU) Parliament, in considering workers' mental health, extended working hours and the control of the employer outside of working hours, has recognised this as "a fundamental

right which is an inseparable part of the new working patterns in the new digital era". ■

Read More:

1. <https://globalnews.ca/news/8888631/ontario-law-right-to-disconnect-work-employees/>
2. <https://www.ibanet.org/Employment-right-to-disconnect-laws-proliferate-during-pandemic>
3. <https://www.ctvnews.ca/business/ontario-becomes-first-province-to-mandate-policies-on-disconnecting-from-work-1.5932358>

A NEW COLOMBIA: THE RISE OF THE LEFT



Gustavo Petro and Francia Márquez (Arturo de La Barrera / CLACSO TV / Wikimedia Commons)

This is a triumph for leftist Gustavo Petro and his vice-presidential running mate, Afro-Colombian environmental activist Francia Márquez.

This victory in Colombia's presidential elections marks an unprecedented historical change, as their win with the Pacto Histórico movement represents a victory for long-sidelined social groups that have become the electoral majority in the country for the first time.

Their support base includes many Afro-Colombian and Indigenous groups, and on an international level, Petro and Márquez's victory has shaken what remained of the United States' comfort zone in Latin America.

Read More: <https://nacla.org/new-colombia-left-elections>