

"WE SHALL NOT BE MOVED" ST. JUDE'S WORKERS NOT DETERRED BY RAINS IN PROTEST OVER WORKING CONDITIONS





On Friday, July 28, 2023, workers at the St Jude's School for Girls held a midday protest outside their newly refurbished Diego Martin compound, demanding better working conditions and terms of employment from their employer.

Accompanied by General Council and Central Executive members, the branch's representatives were unwavering in their commitment as was evident when a sudden heavy downpour, which caused media personnel to scamper for shelter, met the approximately twenty (20) members singing as they placarded the facility's entrance.

Predating the move from the Belmont location, the workers at the School have been voicing their frustrations with the management's practices and a number of Health and Safety concerns, which despite the refurbishing price tag of \$20 million, still trouble this new facility. These include the lack of water, absence of an emergency response unit, improper budgeting, understaffing, and the lack of job security as month-to-month contracts, and the fear of non-renewal, are being used to restrain workers from standing up for their rights.

To reinforce the issues plagueing the workers, two (2) visibly saddened female workers were seen exiting the compound after the rains subsided. In sharing their issues with their fellow St. Jude's workers they identified that they were both presented with letters of dismissal shortly after they reported for work that morning, which stated that their services were no longer required and today would be their last day at

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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. The full listing of all the Branches and the status of their Negotiations will follow in a subsequent issue as that information was being collated at the time.

GUARDIAN MEDIA LIMITED: 2023 - 2026

A Five Year Collective Agreement was settled with a 10% increase in wages (2-2-3-2-1), and improved COLA to \$200.00

WESTERN UNITED CREDIT UNION: 2021 - 2024

Parties completed negotiations agreeing to a 5% wage increase (1-2-2) upon consolidaiton of COLA. COLA now at \$225.00

TRANSCORP CREDIT UNION: 2022 - 2024

Parties have agreed to an increase of 7% in wages (3-2-2)

AMGECU CREDIT UNION: 2023 - 2025

Parties agreed to an increase of 12% (4-4-4) with COLA \$350.00, \$370.00, \$390.00, respectively.



FIRST CARIBBEAN BANK: 2021 - 2025

Parties settled a five-year collective agreement with a 14.5% increase in wages up to 2025.

Seen here with Managing Director, Mr Anthony Seeraj (centre)

TEXTEL CREDIT UNION: 2022 - 2025

Parties have agreed to a 5% increase (1.5 - 1.5 - 2) after consolidation of COLA

TRU-VALU S/MARKET (t/a DOLLAR VALU - Supervisory & Monthly Paid Bargaining Units): 2021 - 2024

Parties have agreed to a wage increase of 6% (2-2-2) for both bargaining units

BETHEL CREDIT UNION: 2020 - 2023

Signed off on Collective Agreement for a 6% increase in wages over a 4-year period (1-1-2-2)

EASTERN CREDIT

UNION negotations team in all smiles after signing the revised collective agreement for all three (3) bargaining units for two three-year periods each. There was a settlement of 7% for each period.



JUDGMENT CORNER RSBD No. 12 of 2021 (RSBD 12/21) - BIGWU v Guardian Shared Services Limited

In this recent judgment of the Industrial Court, a worker with fifteen (15) years of dedicated service with the Guardian Shared Services company was dismissed under the guise of her position being made redundant in 2020.

This dismissal was effected in the midst of the Pandemic and suspiciously after an incident two (2) years prior with her newly hired direct Manager. After that incident in 2018 she reported the offensive and unsavory conduct to HR (Human Capital Development department) but they were incapable of addressing the situation.

From the information presented to the Court, it was apparent that not only were her job functions being unilaterally redistributed to her junior within that two (2) year span, but that the redundancy was a scam and the decision to terminate her was personal. The disengenous nature also applied to the company's offer of alternative employment, of which none matched her skillset.

In the Court's findings, the panel found that the "dismissal was predetermined; void of a valid honest reason and that there was nothing the Worker could say to prevent or delay her dismissal." Her Honor went on to state, that "this case raises frontally the balance of power inherent in the employment relationship," before quoting from Alan Fox's (1971) - "A Sociology of Work in Industry". She quoted "this type of conflict 'involving the individually presented grievance by a lower participant, offers management the least challenge since the balance of power lies so heavily in their favour. The Employee can bring little or no pressure to bear because the organisation can impose severe penalties upon him – in the last resort, discharge- at a relatively much low cost to itself'".

Considering the worker's years of service, age at the time of dismissal (age 53), and the manner in which the dismissal was effected, the Court awarded One Million Dollars (\$1 million). She ended by recounting that "there was simply no humanity shown to the Worker, who knew that the quality of her living must fall, given the costs associated with a dismissal, harsh and oppressive as it were."

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"WE SHALL NOT BE MOVED" story continued from Page 1...

the facility. According to the dismissed worker, there was no prior warning, notification or complaints as it pertains to their performance in their respective capacities.

Agreeing to respond to questions from the media, one dismissed worker shared with Assistant Labour Relations Officer, Comrade Jaunvon Roach, that she was employed with the School for the past five (5) months on month-to-month contracts as a Spanish-Language translator, while her fellow worker, who did not wish to speak to the media, was an english tutor. She went on to convey her shock and concern that as the lone Spanish translator at the facility, her dismissal puts the spanish-speaking residents in a troubling position as there is no one there to be able to communicate with them. She added that "when I informed the girls, they were all crying as they would have developed a bond over the time, as well as not having anyone else at the facility who can understand and translate anything that they are saying and cater to their specific needs. This is wrong!"

On observing the development, a visibly upset Comrade Devenish responded saying, "They have brought migrants into the institution, these young girls who range from 12 to 17 years. They don't know English! So how are they going to see about themselves?" He further added, "..the very system they have put in place with a translator, this manager has dismissed the translator. And for what reason? It's because he feels he is bigger than everybody else so he can do what he

wants. This is an injustice, and we demand the State, the Government, and the Prime Minister [to] take an interest in St Jude's!"

The Union continues to demand for immediate and comprehensive action to the issues faced by workers at the School for Girls, with the promise that failure to address the Union and the worker's issues would force BIGWU to take the matters up before the Industrial Court. ■





PRESIDENTIAL INSURANCE SIGNS FIRST COLLECTIVE AGREEEMENT

The Union would like to officially welcome the workers at Presidential Insurance Company Limited (PICL) into the fold of the Union's Membership.

Since attaining recognition at this family-run Insurance Company in January 2020, Comrade Hayden Hernandez, has been working with the Branch Executive to prepare proposals for the first collective agreement. Proposals were submitted in 2022 and negotiations concluded after approximately eight (8) months of engagement on July 10, 2023 with the signing of their first Collective Agreement for the four (4) year period, 2022 - 2025.

In speaking with Labour Insight, Cde Hernandez praised the Branch Executive for their diligence and hard work throughout the process, of preparing proposals, sharing information with the members and throughout the negotiations process up to the signing. He added that the Agreement secured an eight per cent (8%) increase in wages for the Workers, which is a good start to this process. ■



FROM LEFT: Branch President, Cde Wendy Ann Springer, Cde Hayden Hernandez (BIGWU LRO) shaking hands with Mr. Aslim Ali (Deputy Chairman/Managing Director - PICL) and Mr Beepath (General Manager - PICL)

BELOW: Presidential Negotiations Team with Cde Hernandez (centre)



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"Trade Unions exist because we can achieve more together than we can alone. When working people band together, they're much more likely to get decent wages and be treated well at work."

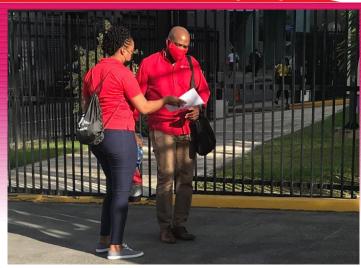
- Trades Union Congress

BIGWU's Organising Department is very integral for the running and development of the Union. Apart from mobilising, building solidarity among the membership, one of its primary objectives is growing the membership of the Union. For the organisation to keep growing this has to happen at both existing branches and new companies where the Union is now seeking recognition.

Working along with Branch Executives, and Labour Relations Officers (LROs), the Organiser helps to ensure that new hires and non-members are encouraged to become financial and active Union members as this increases the Union's bargaining power at the table.

Some of the Union's branches have gone on to have **Agency Shop Orders**, where salary deductions are automatically remitted to the Union for ALL workers within the bargaining unit. The Department has been working on increasing membership levels/density at many of the branches where an Agency Shop Order would be beneficial to the building of Union Power and Negotiations.

Presently the Department has seven (7) applications for new branches before the Registration, Recognition & Certification



FILE PHOTO (Above): Comrade Debbie Ottley (BIGWU Organising Officer) speaks to a Unit Trust worker.

Board (RRCB), where the Union is seeking certification for workers at the Central Bank Credit Union, Hand Arnold Credit Union, The Accreditation Council and Telecommunication Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, to name a few. New member/ branch recruitment is currently ongoing at eleven (11) companies, including The Unit Trust Corporation (TTUTC), CUNA Caribbean, The Regulated Industries Commission (RIC) and Sales Representatives at Smith Robertson & Company Limited.

Conducting Branch Elections is also a key function of the Department, where the Organiser ensures that members elect a Branch Executive for efficient management of the branch and for representation at the Union's General Council, and other decision making bodies of the Union. According to the Union's Constitution, this is required every two (2) years. Twenty-six (26) elections have been conducted over the past year, with approximately sixteen (16) branches where elections are due before the end of 2023. This is inclusive of the Union's Women and Youth Committees where efforts are being made to rejuvenate their activity. ■

WHAT IS AGENCY SHOP ORDER?

According to the Industrial Relations Act, an Agency Shop Order is a directive from the Registration Recognition & Certification Board (RRCB) where ALL the workers of a specified Bargaining Unit are required to pay Union dues.

This arrangement is only enforced where two-thirds (2/3) of the workers of that bargaining unit have voted in favour of the Agengy Shop Order, when balloted by the RRCB. The Order does not automatically make all the workers in the bargaining unit into members of the Union, but facilitates all those workers making a contribution for the benefits received via the Union's efforts in negotiations and representation, etc. The Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association (TTUTA) made an application for Agency Shop Order for sections of the teaching. However, when balloted an insufficient number of persons would have voted in favor of the Order. ■

Extract from "Industrial Relations Act Chap.88:02, Sec 72"

"agency shop order" means an order made by the Board and binding on an employer, the recognised majority union and the workers in the bargaining unit, whereby it is directed in respect of all workers from time to time comprised in the bargaining unit for which the union is certified, that the terms and conditions of employment of those workers shall include a condition that every such worker must pay contribution in accordance with this Part.

INTERNATIONAL WORKERSDAY "MAY DAY"

A Day to APPRECIATE Workers

International Workers' Day, aka May Day, is a celebration of working people and a day when people campaign for decent work and fair pay. Across the World, Unions and workers alike pay homage to the action taken by workers over many years, to win fundamental rights and protections for millions of people; minimum wages, working hours, paid holidays and sick pay, just to name a few.

The Joint Trade Union Movement (JTUM) commemorates the event with a march/procession through the streets of San Fernando, starting at the Oilfield Workers Trade Union (OWTU) Paramount Headquarters, journeying along several popular streets before ending with an address at the Harris Promenade, San Fernando.

This year, one hundred and thirty (130) BIGWU members participated in the march from a number of the Union's branches. ■







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BANKING, INSURANCE AND GENERAL WORKERS UNION

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HERE LIES MACHIEF SERVANT TERO of the WORKERS / >>> PEOPLE of TRINIDAD , TOBACO d respired the revolutionary mass movement in the r0301, 1940, solonialism and to being about an improvement in the quality of LIFE ->> WORKERS throughout the COUNTRY E is a lestimony to the dreams of the oppressed prople of TRINIDAD & TOBAGO d a new society where those who labour will hold thereins

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WORKERS UNION







Born in 1897, Tubal Uriah "Buzz" Butler is regarded as a hero of the people and the man who struck the first damaging blow against colonialism in Trinidad and Tobago, thus giving courage to the fighters for our Nation's Independence. Butler was awarded the Nation's highest award, the Trinity Cross, in 1970 and in 1973 the anniversary of the oilfield riots, June 19, was declared an annual national holiday to be celebrated as "Labour Day".





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TUBAL URIAH "BUZZ" BUTLER [1897-1977]

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Welcome back... BETHEL CREDIT UNION BRANCH

In the Union branches' landscape in Tobago, there are several who operate on the 'sister isle'. Yet, there is only one branch which is uniquely Tobago-nian - **the Bethel Credit Union Co-operative Society Limited**.

BIGWU was awarded recognised majority union (RMU) status for Bethel Credit Union since 1993, but due to staff turnovers and other factors the branch was listed as dormant for about nineteen (19) years.

Comrade Wesley Francis visited the branch in August 2022 and was surprised to learn that aside from only one (1) dues-paying member, the Society had over twenty (20) staff members and a newly constructed branch office in Mt. Marie, Scarborough. The Comrade embarked on a recruitment drive in early 2023, successfully recruiting seventeen (17) additional members and renewing the workers' interest in negotiating improved terms and conditions.

The newly formed Branch Committee, directed by Comrade Francis, prepared and submitted proposals to the Credit Union's management for a revised Collective Agreement in early 2023. This process was completed in under six (6) months yielding a six per cent (6%) wage increase (1-1-2-2) for the fouryear period - January 2020 to December 2023. Workers also benefitted from an improved cost of living allowance (COLA) from \$50.00 to \$250.00, adjustment in working hours down to a 40-hour work week, as well as the introduction of Paternity Leave. The new Collective Agreement was signed off on May 25th 2023 at the Credit Union's Head Office, with Bethel Credit Union representatives from the Board of Directors, HR Committee and the Society's General Manager present. Comrade Francis attributing the speed with which this was completed being largely due to the support, assistance and encouragement of Comrades Devenish and Lee Wah, who were also present at the signing.

Come leh we go to





BETHEL, TOBAGO: BIGWU & Bethel Credit Union Collective Agreement signing ceremony on May 25, 2023

From left (seated): Ms Dianne Baker-Henry (Treasurer - Bethel CU) and Cde Don Devenish (Union President - BIGWU) (standing) Mr James Baptiste (General Manager - Bethel CU), Ms Lael Dennis (Secretary, Board of Directors - Bethel CU), Cde Tia Campbell (Union Branch Secretary), Cde Kedeesha Bailey (Union Branch President), Cde Wesley Francis (Labour Relations Officer), Cde John Mark Lee Wah (2nd VP - BIGWU), and Ms Ann Marie Johnson (Chairperson, HR Committee - Bethel CU) Over the period of negotiations and engagement with the Bethel Credit Union Branch the Union's contingent maximised the opportunity of being on the island by visiting several of the branches. Over a three (3) day period, a total of twenty-six (26) branches were visited by Comrades Francis, Lee Wah and Devenish.

From all accounts, these branch visits were well received by the membership as they were able to voice and raise pressing individual and branch issues and ways in which the Union can service the needs of its Tobagobased members.

In visiting the Cathedral Credit Union Branch, Health, Safety and Environment (HSE) issues were uncovered, which are now the subject of both an Industrial Relations Offence and an Occupational Safety and Health Offence.

Below are some of the photos of some of these branch visits. ■







Comrades Lee Wah and Francis pose with workers at PSCU Credit Union, Scarborough, Tobago Branch.

Comrades Lee Wah and Francis standing for a photo with a Comrade from Police Credit Union Branch, Mt Marie Road, Scarborough.



Comrades Devenish and Lee Wah speaking with workers at the Eastern Credit Union, Canaan Branch.









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Emprovering workers. Embracing the age of digitalization while securing our prosperity

SEPTEMBER 12 & 13, 2023

An overview of Occupational Safety & Health in the Workplace; The OSH Act; Role & Functions of the Joint Safety Committees

OCTOBER 10 & 11, 2023

Models of Trade Unionism - Organising Model, etc.; Labour Legislation; The Workers' Agenda

AUGUST 5, 2023 POSTPONED. rescheduled date TBA

Understanding Judgments of the Industrial Court

SEPTEMBER 16, 2023

Occupational Health & Safety



The Union's 2023 Education Programme is not yet completed, with four (4) more sessions to complete the year's schedule of training.

With the September Sessions focused on Occupational Safety & Health, members interested in attending can still make contact with the Union's Education Officer or their Branch Education Secretary to express their interest in attending any of the two (2) weekday or two (2) Saturday sessions.



Above: Comrade Mario Als sharing with comrades the steps of leading negotiations at their branch.

UNI AMERICAS REGIONAL SECRETARY VISITS BIGWU

In March 2023, the newly elected BIGWU Central Executive had the pleasure of meeting with Regional Secretary of UNI Americas, Comrade Marcio Monzane.

The journey to Trinidad and Tobago allowed for discussions with affiliated Unions ahead of the UNI Global Congress, carded for August 27, 2023 in Philadelphia, USA. Comrade Monzane,



MARCH 2023: UNI Americas Regional Secretary visit to BIGWU. from left: Cde Trevor Johnson, Cde Catherine Robinson, Cde Marcio Monzane, Cde Don Devenish, Cde Nadine Baksh and Cde Jason Brown.

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accompanied by UNI Americas Regional Vice-President, Comrade Trevor Johnson, met with BIGWU President -Comrade Don Devenish, Deputy President - Comrade Jason Brown, General Secretary - Comrade Nadine Baksh and Trustee - Comrade Catherine Robinson.

Comrade Devenish, in speaking with Labour Insight, reported that he was extremely pleased with the visit and that the discussions with the Regional Secretary were very favorable for BIGWU. Cde. Devenish added that the discussions included a proposal/enquiry for UNI's direct intervention and involvement in the rejuvenation, development, and operations of the Union's Women and Youth Committees.

After meeting with BIGWU, Comrade Monzane went on to pay a courtesy call to the Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies



Cde Marcio Monzane, at left, greeting titular member of the UNI Women's Committee, Cde Chennel Cabrera.

(CCLCS) and its Director, Dr. Andre Vincent Henry, before departing to visit other affiliates within the Caribbean region.

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JTUM: "CRIME & ITS Impact on Workers"

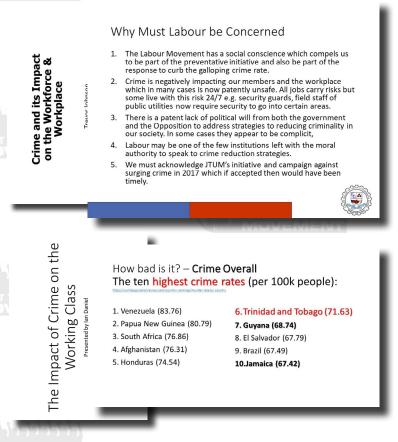
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In April 2023, the Joint Trade Union Movement (JTUM) convened a meeting at the Cipriani College of Labour and Cooperative Studies (CCLCS) for the purpose of discussing the ongoing impact of Crime and its effects on workers and the Working Class. The presentations were delivered by Comrade Trevor Johnson (Assistant General Secretary - JTUM & Fellow Lecturer - CCLCS) and Mr Ian Daniel (Lecturer - CCLCS)

After giving an overview of the current facts/statistics of crime in Trinidad and Tobago, and making comparisons to the rest of the world, attendees were shocked to learn that <u>Trinidad</u> and <u>Tobago's overall crime rate ranked the sixth-highest in the</u> world (worldpopulationreview.com).

Cde Johnson focused on "Why should Labour be concerned with Crime" before delving into some preventative and responsive workplace interventions. But, it was Mr Daniel's presentation which dispelled the belief that crime is only a feature of lower socio-economic status. He went on to identify popular crimes at the various levels of society before ending with the positive correlation between CLASS, WEALTH & CRIME and showing how this is normally an indicator of income equality in a country.

According to Mr Daniel, the way forward would include advocating for the non-reliance on GNP and GDP as indicators of happiness/growth, and for a balanced focus on tackling white collar and violent crimes. He added that marginalized



communities and the youth need to be prioritized and needs to include the involvement of the police to bridge that gap. He ended by saying that as a country we need to balance our efforts in crime suppression with poverty alleviation, while reconstructing our social relationships and the social safety net (for older persons). ■

"(THESE ARE) BREAD AND BUTTER ISSUES" - JTUM TO MINISTER OF FINANCE

In July, representatives of the trade union movement delivered a letter to Minister of Finance - Colm Imbert - regarding "bread and butter" problems impacting lower income individuals nationwide.

The Joint Trade Union Movement (JTUM), the National Trade Union Centre (NATUC), and the Federation of Independent Trade Unions and NGOs (FITUN) were among the organizations represented.

The letter outlined concerns raised at the 2023 Labour Day celebrations in Fyzabad, such as boosting the minimum wage, maintaining the retirement age at 60, lowering fuel prices, and delaying property tax.

JTUM President, Cde Roget, after delivering the letter to the Minister of Finance discussed the letter's purpose with media outside of the Eric Williams Financial Complex in Port-of-Spain.





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REGIONAL & INTERNATIONAL NEWS

NIGERIAN UNIONS PROTEST Rising Cost of Living

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Labor Unions in Nigeria protested in the streets of Lagos against the high cost of living under President Bola Tinubu, calling for improved social welfare interventions to reduce hardships.

The Unions argued that the economic incentives were not enough and were not implemented quickly enough to cushion the effect of the policies, such as suspending costly subsidies that have doubled gas prices and causing a spike in food and other commodities prices.

DOMESTIC WORKERS Household Horrors!

The Jamaica Household Workers' Union (JHWU)has called for the implementation of the Sexual Harassment (Protection and Prevention) Act, 2021. This law deals with issues of sexual harassment that arise in relationships between landlords and tenants, institutions, or the workplace.

The JHWU has been battling with the issue of workers being afraid to make formal complaints out of fear of losing their jobs. The JHWU president noted that live-in workers were the most



Aug 2, 2023: Nigerian Labour Unionists march in the streets of Lagos, Nigeria, to protest the soaring cost of living.

The protests have sparked calls for the government to address the issue of poverty and inequality in Nigeria.

More: <u>https://shorturl.at/dwyI8</u>

affected by harassment of all kinds, and most of the domestic workers were women.

More: https://shorturl.at/koxAU



Above: Imani Duncan-Price (left), Caribbean coordinator, International Domestic Workers Federation, and Elaine Duncan, president of JHWU.

BGWU WORKERS IN GRENADA Protest Republic Bank



Workers of Republic Bank Grenada Ltd., represented by the Bank and General Workers Union, engaged in strike action on June 29th, 2023 at the Bank's various branches on the island. The action stemmed from the Bank's unwillingness to conclude Negotiations for the period January 1st, 2020 to December 31st, 2022.

More: <u>https://shorturl.at/pqyB2</u>



BIGWU sends Solidarity Greetings to the GAWU on their 22nd Delegates Conference which will be convened on August 23 & 24, 2023.

More: https://shorturl.at/auRV1

COUNTDOWN TO 6TH UNI WORLD CONGRESS RISING TOGETHER TO STRENGTHEN OUR GLOBAL MOVEMENT OUR CONGRESS AIMS TO INSPIRE HOPE, NOUR SOLIDARITY AND SPARK ACTION

UNI Global Union's 6th World Congress is carded from Sunday, 27 August to Wednesday, 30 August 2023 at the Philadelphia Convention Centre in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, United States.

The three (3) day Congress, under the theme 'Rising Together,' will unite trade union leaders, representing 20 million

"OUR CONGRESS AIMS TO INSPIRE HOPE, NOURISH SOLIDARITY AND SPARK ACTION AMONG UNIONS AROUND THE GLOBE. WE ARE EXCITED TO BE RISING TOGETHER IN PHILADELPHIA TO SET A PATH THAT WILL IMPROVE WORKERS' LIVES WORLDWIDE." CHRISTY HOFEMAN

GENERAL SECRETARY, UNI GLOBAL UNION

workers worldwide in 150 countries, to build power and set a programme for action for the next four years. Building power for working people through



strong unions and effective collective bargaining is UNI's mission, and the Congress is an opportunity to deepen our shared commitment to growing our unions' numbers and increasing unions' influence over the global economy.