

WORKERS MUST NOT PAY FOR CORPORATE FAILURE



Above: Newsday workers gathered outside of the Company's Pembroke Street office on January 28, 2026 to take a final group photo as the Company announced the end of operations.

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Forced to breathe dust, Workers say 'Enough is Enough' • The Trade Union Movement takes it to the Promenade • Workers must not pay for Corporate Failure • Celebrating Women's leadership, Entrepreneurship and Empowerment • Synopsis of the Retrenchment and Severance Benefits (Amendment) Bill, 2026 • The TTNNA's Big Blue Army takes fight to Port of Spain

MAY DAY

**FRIDAY
1ST
MAY
2026**

**ADVANCING
THE WORKERS'
AGENDA**



IMPORTANT POINTS TO NOTE!!

- Assemble at BIGWU Office @ 6:30 am
- Breakfast served until 7:30 am
- Transport leaves BIGWU @ 7:30 am
- March/Rally begins @ 8:30 am from OWTU Paramount Bldg (San'do)
- Lunch will be provided
- Depart from San Fernando @ 2:00 pm

FORCED TO BREATHE DUST, WORKERS SAY 'ENOUGH IS ENOUGH'

On Monday, March 16, workers at the Teachers' Credit Union's Maraval Road Head Office arrived to find their workplace filled with dust and contaminated air following weekend renovation works.

The very place where they were expected to serve members had become a risk to their health.



ABOVE: Credit Union Workers seated on a make-shift bench in the Society's Car Park after initiating refusal to work provisions. **INSET:** Skin irritations on worker's arms

The workers did not remain silent.

Through their Branch Vice President, Cde. Alisa Romany, they immediately raised concerns with Management to report their discomfort, skin irritations, and fears of long-term harm to their health. Management acknowledged the concerns and promised action by the next day. But then... nothing.

By the following morning, it was clear that the workers' health was not being made a priority. So the workers did what organised workers do - **they called their Union.**

BIGWU's Health and Safety/Assistant Labour Relations Officer, Cde. Keream Roberts, responded and engaged with Management. But, when no meaningful action was taken, the workers made the decision to stand together for their health and lives. They invoked Section 15 of the Occupational Safety and Health Act, refusing to work under unsafe conditions. The matter was reported to Management and the OSH Authority.

On Wednesday morning, workers reported for duty but did not enter the building. Instead, they remained in the Credit

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS:

Occupational Safety and Health Act, Chap 88:08 (as amended)

Under the Section 15 of the OSH Act, a worker has the right to refuse work if they reasonably believe that:

- a. there is **serious and immediate danger** to their health or safety,
- b. equipment or machinery is **unsafe**,
- c. the **workplace conditions are hazardous**, and/or
- d. the situation **breaks the law** and puts workers at risk.

Workers must:

1. Immediately report the issue to your employer
2. Notify your Union / Safety & Health Committee
3. Participate in the investigation process



This is not time off! You are not allowed to leave the premises to go do errands or other business.

Workers are expected to remain in a safe area on the compound and be available until the matter is resolved or guidance is given by the Inspector or Safety Committee.

Union's car park with limited access to basic facilities, and accessed washroom facilities and drinking water from nearby establishments while awaiting intervention.

Shortly after 1:00 p.m., an OSH Inspector arrived to investigate the complaint as reported by the workers. The Officer engaged with Management, Cdes Alisa and Keream and having walked through the workplace, she agreed with the Workers taking action. As a result the Credit Union's Management was forced to immediately relocate the staff away from the hazardous environment.

This did not happen by chance. It happened because the workers stood together, knew their rights, and took guidance from the Union.

Remember: A safe workplace is not a favour to workers, it is your right! And when workers stand together, they win.

THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT TAKES TO THE PROMENADE

In October 2025, the Brian Lara Promenade in Port of Spain was transformed into a vibrant space of worker engagement, as BIGWU joined with our sister unions and other related worker-focused institutions for the Movement's first-ever Trade Union Fair.

Traditionally, when Unions go to Port of Spain we do so to engage in protest action, but this time we converged on the promenade to engage with workers and passers-by to showcase our rich 125-years of Labour History: 1900-2025.

Several well-decorated tents lined the Promenade, between Chacon to Abercromby Streets, where Union representatives engaged persons through discussions, flyers, and interactive activities that brought rights and trade union history to life.

BIGWU's tents anchored the Abercromby Street side of the Fair and drew strong interest from workers as well as other Unions and organisations present. This was largely due to our main banners which highlighted the large number of branches where the Union has representation, as well as some insights into the achievements we have won for workers over the past 45 years.

BIGWU's team, who was there actively engaging persons, answering questions, and showcasing the Union's reach and history on the day, included Cdes. Don Devenish, John Mark Lee Wah, Debbie Ottley, Chennel Cabrera and Jaunvon Roach.



35 YEARS =
350% MORE PAY

BIGWU's negotiations have lifted entry-level salaries across Credit Unions by an average of 350%, putting real value back into workers' paychecks.

"That's the power of BIGWU's Collective Bargaining for Credit Union Workers."



HOW A SHOP STEWARD SHOULD APPROACH WORKPLACE ISSUES

You can use this Checklist as a Quick Guide to thinking like a representative and act in the interest of the Worker.

SHOP STEWARD QUICK CHECKLIST

Ask yourself the following questions?

1. DEFINE THE ISSUE

- What exactly happened?
- Who is involved?
- What is being disputed?
- What outcome does the worker want?

Can I clearly state the issue in **ONE** sentence?

3. IDENTIFY THE RULE/ AGREEMENT

- What does the Collective Agreement say?
- What policy or procedure applies?
- Is there any law involved?

What standard was breached?

2. SEPARATE FACTS FROM FEELINGS

- What are the confirmed facts? (dates, letters, actions)
- What is assumption or opinion?

Do I have evidence to support this claim?

4. BREAK DOWN THE ISSUE

- Was proper procedure followed?
- What evidence exists?
- Was the worker treated fairly?
- Was the outcome reasonable?

Can I explain this step-by-step?

5. CONSIDER MANAGEMENT'S SIDE

- How will management justify their action?
- What evidence do they have?
- Where is my case weak?

Am I prepared to respond to their arguments?

6. EVALUATE OUTCOMES

- What are the possible outcomes?
- What risks are involved?
- Is escalation necessary?

What is the most realistic result?

7. CHOOSE A PRACTICAL SOLUTION

- What resolves the issue effectively?
- What protects the worker?
- What strengthens the Union's credibility?

Am I solving the problem – or just reacting?



EDUCATION PROGRAMME **2026**

THEME: "TO EDUCATE, TO AGITATE, & TO ORGANISE THE WORKING CLASS OF TODAY AND TOMORROW!"

SESSIONS SCHEDULE

APRIL 14-15 *Becoming a Union Member and your responsibilities; The Union Shop Steward; Mobilizing and recruiting Members; Grievance Handling; Disciplinary Hearings/Tribunals*

JULY 7-8 *Collective Bargaining for the Collective Agreement; The ILO and its relevance to Collective Bargaining; the Duty to Bargain in Good Faith; Membership participation in Negotiations.*

MAY 5-6 *OSH and Worker Well-being; An overview of the OSH Act; Role of the Joint Safety Committee Members; Integrating Health and Safety into Union Organising; Work from Home (WFH) and its implications on worker safety.*

SEPT 8-9 *Union Building, Organising and Mobilizing Workshop; the Future of Work: Artificial Intelligence (AI), Automation and Job Security*

MAY 26-27 *Handling Workplace Stress, Mental Health and Workplace Bullying; Domestic Violence and Harrassment in the Workplace; Women in Trade Union Movement; BIGWU & Trade Union History*

OCT 6-7 *The Organising Model of Trade Unionism; Labour Legislation; The Workers' Agenda*

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WORKERS MUST NOT PAY FOR CORPORATE FAILURE

The liquidation of Daily News Limited (NEWSDAY) exposes structural gaps in Worker protection and strengthens the calls for the reform of Trinidad and Tobago Labour Law to protect workers

On the final day of operations, workers gathered quietly outside their workplace — a place where deadlines once defined daily life and presses once rolled without pause. Now, the building stood still. For more than fifty employees of Daily News Limited, the closure is not just the end of a company. It is the beginning of uncertainty.

The collapse of Newsday after 32 years of operation marks the end of one of Trinidad and Tobago's major print media institutions. But beyond the headlines, the closure has revealed something deeper and more troubling: the continued vulnerability of workers when companies fail.

For decades, these workers produced value, sustained operations, and contributed to the success of the enterprise. Yet when insolvency came, they found themselves confronting a stark legal reality — that their severance and employment benefits may not be fully secured, and that their claims rank within a system that does not guarantee full protection.

This is not merely a business event. It is a structural issue affecting workers across the country.

The Reality of Liquidation

Following the filing to wind up Daily News Limited, the High Court appointed a liquidator to manage the company's affairs. The role of the liquidator is to gather and sell company assets and distribute the proceeds according to legal priority rules under the Companies Act.

That process is technical, but its human consequences are immediate.

Workers may be classified as preferential creditors for certain limited claims such as wages and some employment entitlements. However, they do not outrank secured creditors holding fixed charges over assets. Where company assets are insufficient — as is often the case in insolvency — even priority status cannot guarantee full payment.

For many workers, the outcome may be partial payment, delayed payment, or no payment at all. The closure of Newsday demonstrates that legal priority is not the same as economic security.

Severance on Paper — Not in Protection

One of the most troubling features of corporate insolvency in Trinidad and Tobago is the treatment of severance obligations.

Employers are required under accounting standards to recognise employee benefit liabilities. But recognition is not protection. Severance may exist as a bookkeeping entry, yet remain unfunded and unsecured. When a company collapses, workers may discover that what appeared to be guaranteed benefits were never actually set aside.

In practice, severance may function as a promise rather than a protected entitlement, and The Newsday case has brought this reality into sharp national focus.

The Union's Response

BIGWU, as the recognised majority union for the workers of Daily News Limited, has taken a clear and firm position. The Union has called for full transparency in the liquidation process, including independent valuation of assets,

ILO Convention 173 — The Global Standard

International Labour Organization Convention 173 establishes that when employers become insolvent:

- Workers' wage and severance claims must be protected
- Claims should receive priority or be guaranteed
- States may establish wage guarantee institutions
- Workers should receive payment even if employers cannot pay

Many countries operate national wage guarantee funds.

These mechanisms ensure workers are not left unprotected when companies collapse.

disclosure of sale transactions, and scrutiny of any prior transfers that may affect the value available to meet workers' claims.

BIGWU has also reaffirmed that severance is not charity, it is deferred wages earned through years of service.

The Union continues to support affected workers while pressing for structural reform to prevent similar outcomes in the future.

A National Policy Moment

The Newsday closure comes at a time when Government has announced plans to strengthen labour protections, including reforms to retrenchment and severance legislation.

This is not coincidence, it is confirmation.

The situation demonstrates the need for systemic safeguards, such as:

- Protected severance funds
- Mandatory insurance coverage for employee entitlements
- National wage and severance guarantee mechanisms
- Stronger legal protection in insolvency

International labour standards already recognise such measures as necessary to protect workers when employers fail.

Trinidad and Tobago now faces a policy choice: maintain a system that exposes workers to corporate risk, or build one that guarantees their security.

Beyond One Workplace

The closure of Daily News Limited is not an isolated event. It is a case study in how economic restructuring, technological change, and insolvency intersect with labour rights.

Print media is evolving. Business models are changing. Companies may reorganise, digitise, or close entirely.

But economic transformation cannot be allowed to transfer risk entirely onto workers. Those who build companies must not be abandoned when those companies fail.

The Meaning of This Moment

For the workers of Newsday, the issue is immediate and personal. For the country, it is structural and national.

The question now is not simply what happens in this liquidation. The question is what protections will exist for the next group of workers when the next company collapses.

The answer will define the future of labour protection in Trinidad and Tobago.



UPDATE

In early March 2026, BIGWU met with the Court-appointed Liquidator, Ms. Maria Daniel, to represent the plight of the workers within our Bargaining Unit. That intervention has already yielded a critical commitment, where **the Liquidator has agreed that severance benefits will be paid to affected workers within the Bargaining Unit**, contingent upon the recovery of outstanding debts owed to the Company.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

The collapse of Daily News Limited is not just a business story, but it is a national warning. It exposes how easily workers can be left behind when companies fail and when the law treats severance as a promise instead of a guarantee.

BIGWU stands with the workers at Daily News (Newsday) Limited. We will demand transparency in this liquidation and accountability where it is due. Workers must not carry the cost of corporate failure.

This moment must lead to change.

Our laws must protect people — not just paper profits.

Workers are not risk capital. It is time our system finally reflects that truth.

Don Devenish
President, BIGWU





Celebrating Women's Leadership, Entrepreneurship and Empowerment

In celebration of International Women's Day 2026, the BIGWU Women's Committee hosted a vibrant Women's Cocktail and Entrepreneur Showcase, bringing together members, entrepreneurs and professionals for an evening of inspiration, networking and empowerment.

The event provided an opportunity for participants to engage with successful women from diverse industries who shared insights from their personal and professional journeys. Through their stories of perseverance, innovation and determination, the presenters demonstrated how women continue to break barriers, create opportunities and build thriving enterprises.

Guests also had the opportunity to interact with the entrepreneurs, learn more about their businesses and view a range of products and services on display. The showcase highlighted the creativity, resilience and leadership of women within our communities while reinforcing the importance of supporting women-owned businesses.





Candace Greenidge



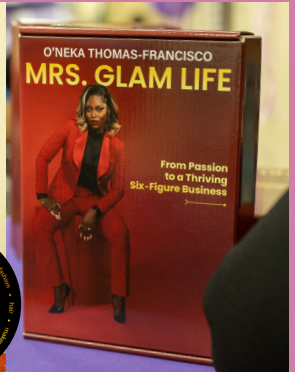
Dr. Sasha Blackman



Nicola Young



Erica Simpson



O'neka Thomas Francisco



Natalie Howe



Kristel Grant (NEDCO)



SYNOPSIS OF THE RETRENCHMENT AND SEVERANCE BENEFITS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2026

The Government has introduced important changes to the law governing job separation and severance benefits. These amendments will impact how employers manage job cuts, how workers are treated during periods of uncertainty, and what compensation is owed when employment ends. This article outlines the key changes and what they mean for union members.

A Shift from “Retrenchment” to “Redundancy”

One of the most noticeable changes is the replacement of the term ‘retrenchment’ with ‘redundancy’. While this may seem like a simple wording update, the new definition is broader and reflects modern workplace realities. Currently, on the closure of a company, a worker loses all severance pay, but with this amendment, it now allows for payment of severance in the closure of a business.

Redundancy will now include job losses resulting from:

- Automation, digitalisation, and artificial intelligence
- Business restructuring to improve efficiency
- Closure or sale of a business
- Economic challenges such as reduced demand or declining markets

- Unexpected disruptions like shortages, breakdowns, or natural events



Minister of Labour, Senator the Honourable Mr. Leroy Baptiste speaking in the Senate.

This expanded definition means that more situations may legally justify job losses by placing workers at a higher risk of job loss unless protections are actively enforced.

For example, the best practice with respect to Artificial Intelligence is that AI should not replace human workers, but with the amendment, this formally recognises technological replacement of workers as a valid reason for job loss.

Introduction of Temporary Lay-Offs

A significant new feature is the introduction of temporary lay-offs.

Employers will now be permitted to suspend workers for up to 90 days without terminating employment. If the worker is not recalled by the 91st day, they are deemed redundant and become entitled to severance pay.

While this provides flexibility for businesses, it also raises concerns:

- Workers may face periods without income
- There is no guarantee of recall within the 90 days
- Extensions beyond 90 days can be agreed to, potentially prolonging uncertainty

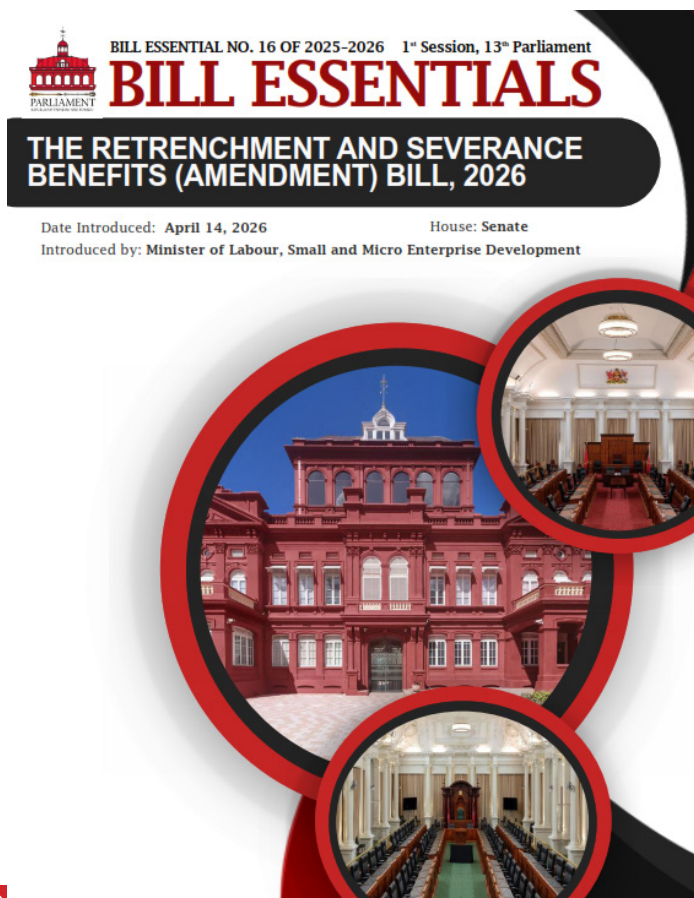
This is an area where union oversight will be especially important.

Mandatory Consultation Before Redundancy

The amendments strengthen the requirement for consultation between employers and unions (or workers where no union exists).

Before issuing notice of redundancy, employers must, no longer ‘may’, engage in meaningful discussions—lasting up to 21 days—covering:

- Reasons for the proposed job cuts
- Measures to avoid or reduce layoffs
- Steps to lessen the impact on affected workers
- The criteria used to select workers for redundancy
- Alternatives such as redeployment, reduced hours, or temporary lay-offs



BILL ESSENTIALS
 BILL ESSENTIAL NO. 16 OF 2025-2026 1st Session, 13th Parliament
THE RETRENCHMENT AND SEVERANCE BENEFITS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2026
 Date Introduced: April 14, 2026 House: Senate
 Introduced by: Minister of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development

SYNOPSIS OF THE RETRENCHMENT AND SEVERANCE BENEFITS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2026 (CONTINUED)

In other words, employers must explain:

- Why jobs are going
- Who is affected and why
- What alternatives were considered

Employers are also required to share relevant information to support these discussions, subject to limited exceptions.

This provision strengthens the opportunity for unions to actively advocate for members and influence outcomes.

Improved Worker Protections

Several new and enhanced protections are included:

- **Notice Pay:** Workers must receive proper notice (minimum 45 days), or be paid in lieu of notice.
- **Paid Time Off:** Workers facing redundancy are entitled to paid time off to seek new employment.
- **Rehiring Priority:** If an employer hires for a similar role within six months, the redundant worker must be given preference.

These measures aim to provide greater fairness and support during transitions.

Bigger Severance Pay

Currently for 1 to 4 years of service - - ½ months pay for each year; for five (5) years and more - for the first 4 years ½ months pay for each year and from the fifth year and over ¾ months pay for each year.

The amendments significantly improve severance payments, particularly for long-serving workers.

Workers with 1-4 years of service will receive increased compensation per year from the current 2 weeks' pay for each year to 1 month's pay for each year.

However, Workers with 5 or more years will benefit from even higher rates- 1 ¼ months pay for the first four years and 1 ¾ months pay for five years and more.

Additionally, the law ensures that service is not unfairly broken due to:

- Renewal of fixed-term contracts
- Changes in employment status
- Short breaks in service (up to three months) followed by re-employment

This closes gaps that previously allowed some employers to reduce severance obligations. In light of the increase, Unions should revise their collective agreements to build on these changes.

Stronger Enforcement and Financial Protection if Companies Collapse

The Bill increases penalties for breaches of the law:

Employers may face fines of up to \$100,000.00 up from \$10,000.00.

Importantly, in cases where a company is wound up, Workers' wages and full severance payments are given priority over taxes and many other debts.

Workers and unions will now also be able to pursue severance claims even in insolvency cases as the Bill to establish that sections 55, 56 and 57 of the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act, which deal with temporary pauses in legal proceedings, shall not apply to a worker or trade union in respect of the recovery or enforcement of severance benefits payable pursuant to the Act.

What This Means for Members

These amendments bring both enhanced protections and new challenges.

On one hand: Severance pay is higher; Consultation rights are strengthened; Workers gain rehiring priority and paid job-search time

On the other hand: Temporary lay-offs may create uncertainty and a broader definition of redundancy may lead to more job losses.

The Role of the Union

The effectiveness of these changes will depend on how they are implemented and enforced. The Union will play a critical role in: Ensuring proper consultation takes place; Protecting members from unfair practices; Monitoring the use of temporary lay-offs; Securing the full benefits owed to workers.

Conclusion

The Retrenchment and Severance Benefits (Amendment) Bill, 2026 represents a major update to labour law. It reflects the changing nature of work, but also underscores the need for strong representation and collective action.

In solidarity

Don Devenish - President



THE TTNNA'S

BIG BLUE ARMY

TAKES THEIR FIGHT TO THE STREETS OF PORT OF SPAIN

On April 10, 2026, Nurses and healthcare workers in Trinidad and Tobago, led by their Association (The Trinidad and Tobago National Nurses Association [TTNNA]), took to the streets of Port of Spain in their numbers.

Frustrated with the state of the Nation's healthcare facilities, nursing personnel, armed with their umbrellas and placards, converged upon the Ministry's Head Office to bring attention to their plight. Apart from highlighting that nursing personnel are still operating on 2013 salaries, they bore signs and chanted slogans to seek to bring some relief to nursing and mid-wifery personnel throughout the Country.

The Association President in speaking with the media highlighted:

- **Severe Staffing Shortages:** The TTNNA claims a deficit of over 1,000 nurses, exacerbated by the migration of local nurses and inadequate replenishment of staff.
- **Unpaid Overtime and Reduced Hours:** NCRHA nurses have reported a slash in the budget for supplemental nurses and refusal to pay for extra hours worked, particularly around the Mt. Hope area.
- **Working Conditions:** Protesters cited lacking, broken, or unavailable equipment, including kitchen utensils at the Port of Spain General Hospital.
- **Retirement Issues:** Concerns have been raised regarding the lack of gratuity for nurses on retirement in certain Regional Health Authorities (RHAs).
- **Stagnant Salaries & Delayed Increases:** Nurses are protesting against the government's failure to settle salary negotiations, demanding better pay amid rising costs.

The demonstration started at the Ministry of Health's Head Office on Queen's Park East and as their numbers grew, they then marched to the Brian Lara Promenade to demand immediate attention from the Minister of Finance.



TTNNA Association President, Comrade Idi Stuart, addressing the media at the start of the April 10 demonstration outside of the Ministry of Health Headquarters, Port of Spain.

Nursing personnel bearing placards in the April 10 Demonstration in Port of Spain.

