

WORKERS STRIKE!!!



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AFTER TWO YEARS OF DELAYED NEGOTIATIONS, WORKS CREDIT UNION WORKERS DOWN TOOLS

Workers of Works Credit Union staged simultaneous industrial action across the Society's four branches on Monday, July 27, 2026. This action came after the breakdown of wage negotiations for the 2023 - 2025 collective bargaining period.

The Union submitted its proposals to the Society approximately two years ago, in 2024. However, it was not until April 2026, when two (2) years had passed and the period of negotiations having expired, that the Credit Union's Management saw it fit to submit a counter-proposal to the Union's initial proposal.

In the Union's submission, apart from improvements to a number of clauses such as subsistence, vacation leave, and additional duties, a 15% increase in salaries was also proposed. This increase, if agreed, would bring the Workers' salaries in line with those of their counterparts in other Credit Unions.



Above: Works Credit Union worker displaying a placard at the initiation of industrial action at the Credit Union's Dundonald Street (Head Office). Photo by Kerry Patrick (TV6NEWS)

The workers have been deeply dissatisfied by the responses to date and this can explain the overwhelming support being demonstrated. They reported to work on Monday, and communicated their initiation of legal strike action against the Society before gathering in front of the Credit Union Head Office. The full strength of the Union was behind the workers in this action with Union Officials present: BIGWU President, Cde Don Devenish; Labour Relations Officers, Cdes Hayden Hernandez and Jaunvon Roach.

The workers have indicated that they are unwilling to tolerate the levels of disrespect being meted out to them, and are prepared to continue their industrial action to the maximum period within the law until the Society returns to the negotiating table with a fair and meaningful proposal.

BIGWU remains prepared to engage the Society in meaningful negotiations toward a reasonable settlement that protects the organisation while improving the standard of living of its workers.

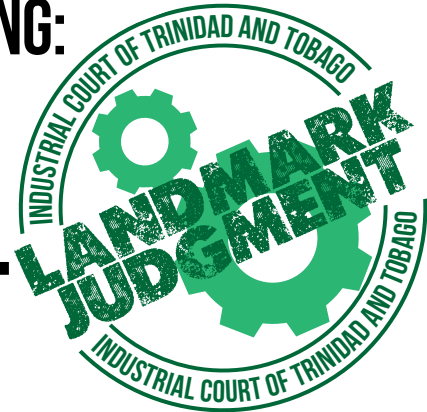


In an attempt to avert this strike action, the Union sought to amend a number of its initial proposals towards gaining a win-win scenario for both parties. However, the Credit Union's Board and management remained rigid and unresponsive in their approach.



ABOVE: Works Credit Union Workers at May Day Rally 2026 in San Fernando.

INDUSTRIAL COURT DELIVERS LANDMARK RULING: PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL IS NOT A DISCIPLINARY TRIBUNAL



“Justice in the workplace is not simply about the outcome — it is about ensuring that the process leading to that outcome is fair.”

In a judgment that will undoubtedly become an important reference in industrial relations practice, the Industrial Court has reaffirmed one of the most fundamental protections afforded to workers: **an employer cannot use a performance appraisal as a substitute for a disciplinary tribunal.**

The decision arose from a trade dispute brought by BIGWU on behalf of Ms. Vishwani Rajkumar against her former employer, Bourse Securities Limited. After carefully reviewing the evidence, the Court concluded that the Employer’s actions were harsh, oppressive and contrary to the principles of good industrial relations, having dismissed the Worker without observing the basic requirements of procedural fairness and natural justice.

While the decision itself represents an important victory for Ms. Rajkumar, its broader significance extends far beyond the facts of the case. The judgment provides much-needed guidance to branch officers, trade unions, employers, managers and human resource professionals on the proper relationship between performance management and disciplinary action.

The Court Draws a Clear Line

Perhaps the most important contribution of this judgment is the Court’s deliberate effort to distinguish two workplace processes that are too often confused.

The Court observed that it was instructive to distinguish a performance appraisal or assessment from a disciplinary tribunal, recognising that although both occur within the employment relationship, they are fundamentally different in their purpose, legal character and consequences.

The Court went even further by explaining that:

“A performance appraisal and a tribunal hearing a charge against a Worker are both workplace processes, but they differ in purpose, legal status, procedure and consequences.”

That simple statement carries profound implications for every workplace in Trinidad and Tobago.

Performance Management Is About Development

Every responsible employer has the right—and indeed the obligation—to monitor employee performance.

Performance appraisals exist to evaluate work, identify strengths and weaknesses, establish goals, provide coaching and encourage improvement. They are intended to foster professional development and improve organisational performance.

Constructive feedback, mentoring and training are all part of effective performance management. The Court recognised this developmental purpose. However, the Court made it equally clear that performance management is not a disciplinary process.

“A performance appraisal may identify areas for improvement, but it cannot replace a disciplinary hearing.”

An unfavourable appraisal may identify areas requiring improvement, but it does not, by itself, constitute proof of misconduct or incompetence warranting dismissal.

Discipline Requires Due Process

A disciplinary tribunal serves an entirely different function. Once an employer believes that an employee’s conduct or performance may justify disciplinary action—particularly dismissal—the employer enters a different legal landscape. At that point, the principles of natural justice become paramount.

1. The employee must know precisely what allegations are being made.
2. The employee must receive sufficient information to understand the case against him or her.
4. The employee must be given a genuine opportunity to answer those allegations.

ARTICLE CONTINUES ON PAGE 8



MAY DAY

INTERNATIONAL WORKERS DAY

On May 1st, workers across the world observe **May Day**, also known as **International Workers' Day**. Its origins are rooted in the eight-hour day movement and its struggle for the eight-hour workday and safer workplace conditions, which reached its high point at the events surrounding the Haymarket Affair in Chicago in 1886. It was here where workers mobilised in the streets for *"eight hours for work, eight hours for rest, and eight hours for what we will."* - a fight that gained worldwide notoriety and became a lasting symbol of worker sacrifice and international solidarity.

Locally, the Joint Trade Union Movement (JTUM) commemorates the day with a Rally/Demonstration through the streets of San Fernando, beginning with Workers gathered outside of the OWTU Paramount Building listening to greetings and messages of solidarity from the various Union leaders. First to speak was BIGWU's President, Cde. Don Devenish, who delivered a strong message acknowledging the challenges facing workers amidst this year's celebrations. He reminded us that while we are grateful for the recent amendments to the Retrenchment & Severance Benefits Act (RSBA), workers' rights must not only be written into law, but respected in practice, and that **"only a strong, united trade union movement can truly advance the workers' agenda."**

After hearing messages from other Leaders, the gathering was organised by their Unions before proceeding to Harris Promenade. Workers, armed with their banners and placards, marched through the streets towards Harris Promenade, where JTUM President and OWTU President General, Cde. Ancel Roget, gave his feature address.

May Day, in the words of Cde Devenish, should be a powerful reminder that *"Workers' rights were not freely given. They are fought for. They are defended. They are protected by Unity."* We must heed the call to continue defending our gains and advance the interests of workers in every sector.



Workers assembled at the OWTU Paramount Building before the start of the 2026 May Day Demonstration.
INSET: Cde Devenish delivering his address/greetings at the start of the Demonstration.



Click or scan here to view the Solidarity Greetings delivered at the start of May Day 2026 (OWTU Facebook Page)



MAY DAY TIMELINE

TODAY

A Lasting Legacy
The 8-hour day remains a symbol of worker sacrifice, solidarity, and progress

1973

Labour Day Declared
June 19 became a National Holiday in honour of the workers' struggles of 1937.

1937

**8-Hour Day Recognised
JUNE 30, 1937**

Legislative changes moved wages onto the basis of an 8-hour day instead of the former 9-hour day.

**Labour Uprisings
JUNE 19, 1937**

The 1937 disturbances forced the nation to confront the realities facing workers.

Growing Worker Discontent

Low wages, long hours, and poor working conditions fuelled labour agitation in Trinidad and Tobago.

1920-30s

Global Labour Standards

The formation of the ILO strengthened the international push for fair hours and decent working conditions.

1919

Indentured Labour in Trinidad

Indentured labour contracts still required 9-hour workdays, showing the harsh realities of labour in colonial Trinidad.

1909

MAY 1 Recognised

May 1 was adopted internationally as a day of worker solidarity and struggle.

1889

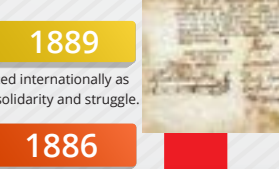
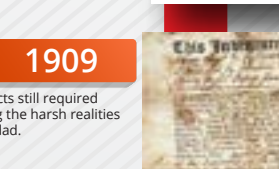
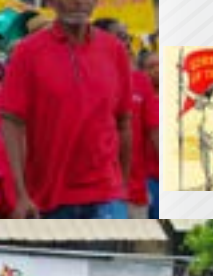
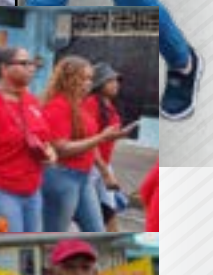
**HAYMARKET AFFAIR
May 1, 1886**

Workers in Chicago fought for the 8-hour workday, making shorter working hours a global labour demand.

1886



Sharing Water - Cdes Ellis and Keream, sharing water to BIGWU members along the roadway for May Day.



LABOUR DAY 2026

“ADVANCING THE WORKER’S AGENDA”

On June 19th, BIGWU participated along with our sister unions of the **Joint Trade Union Movement (JTUM)** to commemorate Labour Day 2026. Members gathered at the Union Office from 6:00 am to get onto the shuttles bound for Avocat Junction, Fyzabad, before processing to Charlie King Junction, retracing the sacred ground in Trinidad and Tobago’s labour history.

This annual procession serves as both remembrance and recommitment: celebrating the victories won throughout our struggles while highlighting the challenges workers continue to face today. **For BIGWU and the wider labour movement, Labour Day remains a call to defend dignity, fairness, and justice at work.**



SCAN
FOR
MORE







INDUSTRIAL COURT DELIVERS LANDMARK RULING: PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL IS NOT A DISCIPLINARY TRIBUNAL ARTICLE CONTINUES FROM PAGE 3

Only after a fair hearing can an employer determine whether disciplinary action is justified. These safeguards are not mere technicalities. They are the very foundation upon which good industrial relations are built.

Where the Employer Went Wrong

In this case, the Worker challenged an adverse performance appraisal through the Employer's internal appeal mechanism.

Instead of treating the appeal as part of a performance management process, the Employer reviewed aspects of her work and ultimately relied upon those findings to terminate her employment.

The Court found several serious deficiencies in the Employer's approach: The Worker was never formally charged. She was never informed that dismissal was being contemplated. She was never provided with the evidence relied upon before the decision was taken. Most importantly, she was never afforded a proper disciplinary hearing where she could defend herself before losing her livelihood.

By relying upon a performance review to justify dismissal without first conducting a proper disciplinary process, the Employer denied the Worker procedural fairness.

The Court therefore held that the dismissal was contrary to the principles of good industrial relations.

"An employer cannot convert a performance appraisal into a disciplinary tribunal simply because the appraisal reveals deficiencies. Once dismissal is contemplated, procedural fairness must take over."

A Judgment That Strengthens Workplace Justice

The Industrial Court has, over six decades, developed a rich body of jurisprudence emphasising fairness, transparency and respect for workers' rights. This judgment builds upon that legacy. It reinforces the long-established principle that employers cannot bypass disciplinary procedures simply because concerns first arise during a performance assessment.

Performance management and disciplinary action may sometimes involve similar facts, but they remain legally distinct processes.

The distinction is not academic. It determines whether a worker enjoys the right to know the allegations, to answer

KEY LESSONS FOR MEMBERS:

- Performance appraisals are meant to assess, guide, and improve performance.
- An adverse appraisal is not the same as a disciplinary finding.
- If dismissal is being considered, the worker must be told clearly.
- The worker must know the allegations and be given a fair chance to respond.
- A proper disciplinary hearing is required before serious disciplinary action is taken.
- The right to natural justice remains central to good industrial relations.

them and to defend his or her employment. Those rights cannot be ignored simply because an employer labels the process a "performance review."

"Performance management seeks improvement. A disciplinary tribunal determines responsibility. They are not the same process, and they cannot be treated as one."

Although this judgment concerned the dismissal of one worker, its significance extends to every workplace represented by BIGWU.

The Court has reaffirmed that fairness cannot be sacrificed for convenience.

Employers retain the right to evaluate performance, set standards and require improvement. Equally, workers are entitled to expect that where dismissal is contemplated, the employer will observe the principles of natural justice and good industrial relations.

For BIGWU, this decision represents another important contribution to the development of labour law in Trinidad and Tobago. It reinforces the Union's long-standing commitment to ensuring that every worker is treated with dignity, fairness and respect.

As workplaces continue to evolve and performance management systems become increasingly sophisticated, this judgment serves as a timely reminder that no appraisal, assessment or review can ever replace the fundamental right of a worker to a fair hearing.

That principle remains one of the cornerstones of industrial justice — and one that BIGWU will continue to defend on behalf of every member.

Don Devenish
BIGWU President

Source: Trade Dispute No. 532 of 2016 - BIGWU v Bourse Securities Limited [ICTT, Library]

OSH INVESTIGATOR CONFIRMS: “WORKERS WERE RIGHT TO REFUSE UNSAFE WORK”

Official OSH investigation vindicates Teachers Credit Union workers and exposes serious deficiencies in the management of renovation works.

The decision by workers of Teachers Credit Union to refuse unsafe work during renovation activities at the Society's Maraval Road Head Office, in March of this year, has been officially vindicated.

In the previous issue of Labour Insight (Issue 01-2026), we reported that workers exercised their right to refuse work after construction dust contaminated their workspaces. Their concerns have now been supported by an Occupational Safety and Health Inspector.

In a report dated May 20, 2026, **the Inspector concluded that hazardous or injurious circumstances had arisen at the Credit Union and that the workers' refusal to work was justified under Section 15(a) of the Occupational Safety and Health Act.**

The investigation unearthed that adequate systems of work were not established or implemented before renovations began. Deficiencies were identified in risk assessments, control measures and supervisory oversight. Higher levels of airborne dust were also observed on the ground floor when compared with the first floor.

The report further noted that workers were not given specific precautionary instructions and that no Safety and Health Committee was in place. According to the Inspector, failing to address these conditions could expose persons to risks capable of causing serious ill health.

Following the Inspector's intervention, workers affected by the renovations were temporarily relocated to the upper floors of the building.

This outcome reinforces an important lesson for all workers. **Refusing unsafe work is not insubordination when the legal requirements are satisfied - it is the exercise of your protected right.**



KEY FINDINGS	DETAILS
NO ADEQUATE SYSTEMS	Deficiencies in assessments, controls and supervision
HIGHER AIRBORNE DUST	Ground-floor levels exceeded those observed upstairs
RISK OF SERIOUS ILL HEALTH	Unsafe conditions could have serious consequences



ABOVE: Flashback from March 2026 when workers gathered outside after initiating Refusal to Work.
BELOW: UNITED AND VINDICATED - Teachers Credit Union workers pictured during Labour Day 2026.
Their collective action was instrumental in securing intervention and a safer working environment.

CEC ELECTIONS 2026 - 2030

Nominees for National Office



Election Day:
Monday, September 7, 2026

The nominated candidates for the Union's Central Executive Committee (CEC) Elections for the 2026 - 2030 Term of Office are as follows:

PRESIDENT

Debbie-Ann Ottley
Hugo Henry
Emmanuel Downes

DEPUTY PRESIDENT

Jaunvon Roach
Tamara Yee-Springer

1ST VICE PRESIDENT

Tarshish George
Ambay Maharaj-Mc Queen

2ND VICE PRESIDENT

Keream Roberts
Anson Dale Humphrey

GENERAL SECRETARY

Mandy Clarke-Whitley
Catherine Robinson

DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY

John Mark Lee Wah
Octavia Williams

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY

Vivian Joseph
Crystal Williams

BIGWU Members are encouraged to participate fully in the Union's Democratic processes. General Council members are kindly asked to ensure that this notice, or the official notice from the Union Office, is placed on Union notice boards throughout the workplace.



UNI REGIONAL SECRETARY VISITS LOCAL AFFILIATES

BIGWU welcomed UNI Americas Regional Secretary, Brother Márcio Monzane, during a courtesy visit to Trinidad and Tobago on June 9, 2026.

Brother Monzane was accompanied by Cde. Trevor Johnson, UNI Americas Regional Executive Member, as part of a regional outreach programme aimed at strengthening relations with affiliated trade unions and hearing directly about the issues confronting workers throughout the Caribbean.

During the visit, the UNI representatives met with BIGWU officials and exchanged perspectives on matters affecting the Union and its membership. The engagement also provided an opportunity to reaffirm the importance of continued regional cooperation, information-sharing, worker education and international solidarity.

The UNI Americas delegation also visited sister affiliates, the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Workers Union and the Communication Workers' Union. Discussions with the local unions addressed developments within their respective sectors, collective bargaining, inflation, worker education and training, and the need for strategic approaches to the changing world of work.

The visit reinforced the value of strong relationships between local trade unions and their international affiliates. Through UNI Global Union, workers in Trinidad and Tobago are connected to a wider movement confronting common challenges and advancing the rights and interests of workers across borders.

BIGWU looks forward to continued collaboration with UNI Americas and its regional affiliates in building trade union strength throughout the Caribbean.



BIGWU Organising Officer, Cde Debbie-Ann Ottley (at centre) meets with UNI Americas Regional Secretary Brother Márcio Monzane (at left) and Regional Executive Member Cde. Trevor Johnson (at right), during Cde. Monzane's courtesy visit to BIGWU on June 9, 2026.



CWU Secretary General, Cde. Joanne O'Geer (at centre), with UNI representatives during their courtesy visit to the Lyle Townsend Solidarity Hall, home of the Communication Workers' Union.

Brother Márcio Monzane and Cde. Trevor Johnson joined members of the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Workers Union Executive during the regional affiliate visit.



REGIONAL & INTERNATIONAL NEWS

AMAZON WORKERS WIN FIRST NATIONAL AGREEMENT

Amazon workers in Italy have secured the company's first nationwide collective agreement anywhere in the world.

Three Italian unions—Filt CGIL, Fit Cisl and Ultrasporti—signed the agreement, which covers workers at 57 Amazon sites across the country. It expands workers' rights and places limits on the company's use of video surveillance.

The agreement builds upon a labour protocol negotiated in 2021 and demonstrates what organised workers can accomplish through solidarity and collective bargaining.

UNI Global Union welcomed the victory but stressed that collective bargaining should not be limited to Italy. As a global corporation, Amazon must respect workers' right to organise and bargain collectively wherever it operates.

READ FULL ARTICLE:
<https://tinyurl.com/363wbwyv>



ANTIGUA BANK WORKERS SECURE 11% INCREASE



The ABWU has signed a new collective agreement for employees of the Eastern Caribbean Amalgamated Bank. The three-year agreement provides an 11% salary increase, with high-performing workers eligible for up to an additional 2%.

Workers also gained paid study leave, increased paternity leave, paid adoption leave, shorter Friday working hours and improved long service compensation.

READ FULL ARTICLE:
<https://tinyurl.com/3bbawr8j>

UNIONS ACROSS THE AMERICAS PUSH BACK

Trade unions across the Americas are confronting growing attempts to weaken organised labour, restrict protest and reduce worker protections.

During a visit to Argentina, UNI Global Union General Secretary Christy Hoffman and UNI Americas Regional Secretary Márcio Monzane met with UNI affiliates and heard about the challenges facing unions throughout the region.

AFP JOURNALISTS WIN 27% AFTER STRIKE



Journalists and media workers at the AFP bureau in Istanbul ended a 12-day strike on July 17 after securing a 27% wage increase.

The workers, represented by the **Türkiye Gazeteciler Sendikası**, took action after negotiations failed to produce wages that adequately responded to inflation.

The victory demonstrates how worker unity and determined collective action can secure meaningful improvements.

READ FULL ARTICLE:
<https://tinyurl.com/5c936zm2>

UNI reports that governments have used economic emergencies, technological change and artificial intelligence to justify weakening labour regulations and organised labour. The organisation also highlighted restrictions on industrial action and public demonstrations in several countries, including Trinidad and Tobago.

Despite these pressures, unions across the region have pledged to remain organised, united and prepared to defend workers' rights.

READ FULL ARTICLE:
<https://tinyurl.com/s6mbywewu>