With the support of the European Union, the Caribbean Congress of Labour is pleased to launch this first issue of CCL Today. It is our aspiration to provide through this publication a forum to stimulate new thinking, dialogue and debate on issues that are of concern to working people and their organizations.

Trade unions are confronted with many challenges; companies are forced to downsize resulting in changing employment relations, more workers are in precarious jobs and an increasing number of workers can be found in the informal sector which has traditionally not been considered for trade union organization. This first issue focuses on trade union relevance, the challenges and opportunities in the region as well as the benefits to be derived from the CARIFORUM-EU Economic Partnership Agreement.

We would owe a debt of gratitude to all our contributors who willingly gave of their time and ideas to make this publication happen. We would also like to extend special thanks to the International Labour Office for giving us permission to reprint the Lloyd Goodleigh article, which although written in 2006, is still very much relevant for shaping the trade union agenda today. We also extend our gratitude to Paula Robinson, ILO Senior Specialist, Workers’ Activities, for her technical support and guidance; and to Chris Harper, our National Project Officer for coordinating efforts which were required to make this publication a reality. Again we express our appreciation of the financial support of the European Union under the CEC/CCL Component of the Support to Facilitate Participation of CARIFORUM Civil Society in Regional Development and the Integration Process.

It is our hope that this periodical will be produced bi-annually, and become an institution of the Caribbean Congress of Labour. We invite you to read the articles and share them as part of your education and information programmes and to encourage discussion within your organizations.

We look forward to receiving your feedback and the continued support of your members through the contribution of more articles for future issues of this periodical.

David Massiah
President (2010-2016)
Chester Humphrey
General Secretary (2010-2016)
“In this most dynamic period, workers were organised in almost all areas of economic activity in the private and public sectors; social and labour legislation granted rights, power and protection; labour leaders were the lions of the community and played a leading role in the process of decolonisation and Independence.”
Trade Unions were conceived in the British Caribbean at a time of cataclysmic and seismic changes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Working Men’s Associations and Rate Payers’ Associations of the 1890s morphed into nascent trade unions and political parties before the second world war. The circumstances which created the context for the formation of these early instruments of working class advancement were many and varied. Perhaps most pervasive, was the need to respond to the powerlessness which confronted ordinary men and women, subjects rather than citizens, of a powerful British Empire, which restricted their human aspirations, and negated the real value of emancipation from slavery over a century before. In a very real sense, British Colonialism between 1838 and 1938 was a restrictive and constrictive phenomenon which negated the impact of freedom from chattel slavery.

It must be noted, that the most powerful mass response by working class blacks, which spread across the Caribbean, into Latin America, and centered in the United States of America, was not a labour Organization, but a racial and social expression called the Universal Negro Improvement Association. Its leader, Marcus Mosiah Garvey, was both founder of a trade union and a political party in his native Jamaica, but it was his call to uplift the African people that received greatest traction. Garvey’s movement shared the period with the expansion of ideological diversion of the various strands of socialism, the intrusive role of the modern state, in the lives of ordinary citizens and subjects.

Progressive alternatives to imbedded conservatism and rampant capitalism, from a mild Liberalism expressive of the rights of man, to the extreme of scientific socialism, offered ideological bases for the nascent labour movement. Not surprisingly, based on the historical experience in the region, socialism was the dominant ideological base on which the early labour movement was based. This movement embraced the waged and unwaged, feminism, pan africanism, cooperativism, and an amalgam of issue areas relating to the need to uplift the strugglers of the region. By the 1930’s the Organization of unions and proto-unions had taken place in all of the British Caribbean territories with assistance mainly from British and American sources.
The Great Depression of the late 1920s and the early 1930s, led to civil disturbances, the establishment of various Commissions, chiefly the Moyne Commission, and a blueprint for sponsored institutionalisation of democratic institutions led by an emerging elite which had been anglicised by educational opportunities in Britain, at one extreme, and an eclectic band of home grown leaders educated in the school of hard knocks at the national levels. The predominant outcome of the period between the 1930s and the 1980s was the evolution of political unionism, an ideological response to colonialism.

The twin forces of party and union working together in the sphere of power and governance, was matched only by the twin of church and school in the social sphere. In this most dynamic period, workers were organised in almost all areas of economic activity in the private and public sectors; social and labour legislation granted rights, power and protection; labour leaders were the lions of the community and played a leading role in the process of decolonisation and Independence. They also championed the process of regional integration in its various forms, economic and political. It can be argued that between the period of 1945 and 1970, in a world where the world economy prospered, the labour movement through its role in collective bargaining, contributed significantly to the development of Caribbean economies. The post 1970s period, impacted by the geopolitics of oil, and a new wave of globalisation and monetarism, undermined the trade union movement, and as the economic bases of the local economies became unglued, a new phase of unionism appeared. The removal of protectionism in the markets for Caribbean staples like sugar and bananas; the rising cost of energy from fossil fuels; the burden of maintaining an infrastructure of social institutions, and a superstructure of social services, impacted national financial planning, and soon the effects of rising national debts, deficits, unemployment, and low growth became institutionalised in the region. The role of International Financial Institutions, particularly the International Monetary Fund, with its programme of restructuring the role of the state, weakened the glue that kept the phenomenon of political unionism together.

The post 1980s brought escalating incidents of global recessions, and the struggles of Caribbean nation states to defend their independence in a period where, with the end of the cold war, the rise of global power blocks, the power of the WTO and the end of soft loans and grants, the need for diversified economies, and the shift from hegemony to a bi-polar, and now to a multi-polar reality, has seen significant shifts in the stance of the labour movement.

Certainly, while labour leaders have always been under the influence of the International Labour Organization (ILO), this influence has become even more pronounced in the post 1970 period. The ILO has played a significant role in bringing into the mainstream issues such as Health and Safety interventions, the Socialisation of Trade Relationships, and the Decent Work Agenda. The ILO has also played a significant role in helping to moderate the attitude of the International Financial Institutions to trade unions, who are now part of national consultations on country performances.

The single most pronounced influence of the ILO has been in the development of Social Dialogue, with the Social Partnership as the flagship of this exercise in collaborative industrial relations. Today, national centres, coalesced private sector groupings, and the state, cooperate in the face of external challenges, in countries across the region, at a time of crisis and challenge facing the regional economies. In many instances traditional collective bargaining has been constrained. Sometimes new investors are refusing to play by the rules of the game and governments cannot always be trusted to be the model employer. The rate of unemployment is in excess of the norm. Labour Organization is resisted, and the index of unionisation is lower than it has been in decades. Furthermore, the leadership born in the cold war years is retiring, and a new generation of millenials is trying valiantly to assess their inheritance and adapt to the changing circumstances. They are operating in a period of adversity that is very different from any earlier period.

Can trade unions, within the context of the Social Partnership, put national economic growth, cooperation with the private sector in fostering productivity and competitiveness, nurturing small business development, reorganising state operations, moving to 24/7 operations and providing for further flexibility of labour, resist the charge of varying too far from their initial strategic imperatives?

Can the exchange of marches, demonstrations and industrial action, for deeper engagement in governance arrangements through negotiations and strategic compromises retain the mystique of power they have cultivated over the years? Will the millenial workforce be amenable to unionisation in an atmosphere where individualism and virtual employment is controlled by telecommunications, transnational companies and companies that are ready to remove and relocate? The above challenges have to be answered by new leaders in the movement in a bifurcated economy where many companies have no real local structures to be organised, and the already heavily organised private and public sectors are presenting challenges of increasing complexity, including demands to be rid of old terms and conditions.
OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGES OF THE 21ST CENTURY - A GUIDE FOR THE CARIBBEAN TRADE UNIONIST

By Danny Roberts

Introduction

The circumstances that form the setting for the effective functioning of the 21st century trade union, if not properly understood, could diminish the role of organised labour in regional development and expose the worker to further exploitation even in a contractual relationship. This understanding of a re-configured global environment in which labour must find a space and place, must take, as its point of departure, a realization that the driving force of the world economy since the 1980s has been the dominance of market-oriented, liberalized trade policies and the triumph of the free market.

What is more, trade unions can no longer depend on governments for protection since the increasing marketization of global commerce has effectively undermined government’s institutional capacity to manage their economic affairs, and has witnessed the rise of Multinational Corporations (MNCs) as the dominant players in the economics and politics of nation-states. These global changes have their roots in the classical political economic theory of neo-liberalism, which advocates for markets to remain unrestricted from any type of government interference; which, as recently as the last decade was seen as necessary to stabilize, promote growth, temper inequalities, cultivate civic pride and limit the detrimental side effects of the laissez-faire market.¹

Contemporary trade union leaders must not lose sight of the fact that the existing globalization theory compels the world towards closer economic integration through investments, and that the absence of rules governing investments have raised questions about their effects on economic development, environmental protection, political and economic stability and (of significance for trade unions), labour standards.

As the region remains caught in the throes of this global phenomenon, the drive for investments and jobs have begun in earnest. The Caribbean, like so many other developing and newly-emerging markets, has been forced to ‘liberate’ their economies from government ‘interference’ through deregulation and privatization. The results of the expanding geographical influence of capital in the region, and the adoption of growth strategies have had the most devastating effects on the labour market. Here, labour market institutions like trade unions have been weakened by a process of Organizational adaptation with the resultant effects of job retrenchment, in many cases in unionized settings; wage stagnation; the use of contract labour; and the significant changes in employment relationships in which fixed term contracts have replaced open-ended contracts.

Consequences for trade unions

For the 21st century trade union leaders, the ability to understand and differentiate between the casualty of organised labour as the collateral consequence of a process of Organizational adaptation, and the deliberate effort to weaken unions as part of a wider neo-liberal scheme, is fundamental to how the movement adapts and organises for the future. The

disintegration of large workplaces and the polarization of the workforce have hampered trade unions’ ability to carry out their core function of organising. Technological changes have also resulted in thousands of workers being retrenched, with the manufacturing and agricultural sectors – areas with high trade union density – suffering serious decline across the Caribbean, while the growth in the service sector has taken place with an emphasis on skilled workers who are better educated, career minded, individualistic and less motivated by class solidarity.

Footloose investors in search of low wages have also been attracted to the region, and according to Morris (2002) in an ILO publication - Trade Unions and Globalization: A Caribbean Workers’ Education Guide, “any attempt at organising [their] employees into trade unions is met by rebuttal which can take the form of challenging the country’s industrial relations system or may lead to an abandonment of the investment and moving on to a more compliant location.”

Trade union leaders and their members need therefore to be au fait with the strategies of neo-liberalism and to recognise that inherent in this strategy is the deliberate effort at de-unionizing the workplace. Countervailing arguments have to be developed to avoid any support for the view that unionization produces higher wages at the expense of fewer jobs, and therefore raises the price of labour above the ‘equilibrium price’ which leads to a rise in unemployment.

Many of the social legislations which were passed through the instrumentality of trade unions, to provide protection in the areas of maternity leave, redundancy payments as well as sick and vacation leave benefits have been circumvented by new employment contracts that remove the legal basis for workers to exercise their right to freedom of association and collective bargaining. Wages have been stagnant in the process, unemployment has remained stubbornly high and the gap in wages between skilled and unskilled workers has been widening, not to mention the widening gap in income inequalities that has become increasingly evident in the region.

What we do know is that in the 1930s similar conditions existed: the low wages, poor working conditions, high unemployment, the absence of meaningful dialogue and consultation, were the precursors to the labour upheavals of the times and ushered in the modern trade union movement across the region. These conditions, in varying degrees, which persist today, though in more subtle form, are equally dangerous to trade unions and could render labour unions ineffectual in the representation of their membership at the collective bargaining level.

These expose one of the weaknesses that the modern-day trade union leaders must seek to overcome, and that is the absence of a coherent set of philosophical ideas that can play a role in determining what new forms of worker organization will exist once the old forms have withered away.

If Caribbean labour is to protect and preserve some of the basic rights of workers, then the movement has...
to renew itself to remain relevant, and to develop new strategies and approaches to ensure its continued impact on national development within the context of a trade union philosophy.

The 21st century Trade Union Advocate

Trade unions now have to function in an environment marked by rapid changes in the world of work. The emphasis on a highly skilled, educated and trained workforce represent one end of a segmented labour market in which the workers are less likely to seek unionization, despite facing similar challenges on issues such as social protection, pensions and health care. At the other end of the spectrum is the increasing number of workers engaged in vulnerable employment. The 2014 ILO World of Work Report highlighted the fact that these workers “tend to be trapped in a vicious circle of low-productivity occupations, poor remuneration and limited ability to invest in their families’ health and education, which in turn dampens overall development and growth prospects…” (p. 4)

Both technological changes and liberal economic policies have undermined the social basis of Caribbean trade unions. The shift towards flexible work practices, primarily in the private sector, and the reduction in the size of the public sector, that was the main citadel of unions in the region, have restricted the future growth of the movement. This means that the first thing required of trade union leaders is to ensure that their unions adopt structures that are representative of the changes in the composition of the workforce, and they embrace new approaches to providing services to their constituents. It means also the possibility of broadening support and collectivity through mergers with other unions, as well as the provision of specialized services to categories of workers outside the ambit of the collective bargaining process.

What this spells out for the 21st century trade union leaders is the importance of worker education for a liberated workforce which serves to empower the working class as an equal partner in shaping the new Caribbean polity. But the trade unions must adapt themselves to the new realities of the times and command recognition as major partners in development; contributing to the growth of markets and democratic institutions and influencing the course and content of economic progress. The modern trade union leadership, Rex Nettleford asserted, must be able to see beyond the ‘surfeit of changing patterns’ to understand both the historical context and circumstances in which labour and the trade union movement have developed. Unions must accept the need for flexibility on terms that make the lives of the vast majority of workers in an era of profound technological changes worthwhile and meaningful.

It is very important therefore for trade union leaders to understand, and be able to articulate a perspective of history that locates globalization as part of the evolution of Caribbean economic (under)development. In that regard, the raison d’être of trade unions must be represented with some amount of historical accuracy as part of a movement founded on ideals, values and vision of how societies ought to be managed, and that labour must have an equal voice in providing the stability and equilibrium for our economies to prosper. This places the role of trade unions in a wider context where the notion of equity and social cohesion are promoted against the background of growing income inequalities, and of necessity, the need to promote the redistributive efforts of the labour market. As the former ILO Director General Juan Somavia once said: ‘we are to say ‘yes’ to market economy and ‘no’ to the market society’.

Any resistance to the growing challenges imposed by globalization has to be led by the trade union movement across the region. The Trade Union must be possessed of the intellectual and political leadership that can clearly articulate the centrality of labour in the development process, of the need to protect workers’
rights, to build social cohesion and eradicate poverty. Importantly, trade union leaders, through empowerment, capacity building and training, must help to realise the full potential of the workers in making their contribution to the development process.

The 21st century trade union leaders must have a clear understanding of the complex and volatile world in which we live, and must be able to articulate this in even clearer terms for workers to understand. Unions must be seen as major players in the process of economic development, their leaders accepted as advocates of not only trade union issues, but broader issues of social justice within the society, and they must have the Organizational capacity and political support at both the national and international levels. The decline in trade union density does not have to affect the level of trade union influence.

In fact, that broader agenda will effectively help trade unions at the collective bargaining level to secure the fundamental rights which are under threat at the workplace. Unions have to come up with inventive ways to organise membership and support and to represent a broad coalition of forces with a clear perspective on the current global trends. The working population across the region must see trade unions as representing their interests even if they are not members. Those broad issues of workers’ right, employment creation, social protection, income security and occupational health and safety must be realized through strategies developed by the leadership of the trade union movement. More than any other organized groups in civil society, trade unions have been involved in the economic system of production and distribution, they have influenced public policy and labour legislation, developed association with housing corporations and social security Organizations, and have organised the most vulnerable groups in our society.

Beyond that, there must be a set of practical solutions offered by trade union leaders as an alternative to the failings of the Washington Consensus to provide the platform for economic growth and meaningful development of our societies. This means that trade union leaders must be part of any national debate or tripartite discussions about the way forward and to ensure that the expressions of globalization and market efficiency include protecting workers’ rights and fulfilling the social needs of the workers. The ILO, in addressing the issue of the human face for the global economy, emphasised that societies like ours need to find a balance between the regulatory function of the state, the capacity of the market to generate wealth and economic growth and the economic well-being of the citizens.

The need for trade unions to represent their concerns on a global level is crucial. The adoption of core labour standards embodied in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work will ensure that local issues have a universal appeal and can benefit from the solidarity and support of the international trade union movement.

Conclusion

The positive role of unions in Caribbean societies must be articulated by the leaders. They must embrace part of the strategies of the union globally to act more effectively at the international level and create a more enabling environment for organising and collective bargaining in the region. The re-focussing of the region’s trade union movement to create new institutional safeguards for working people must be a priority. The need to facilitate opportunities for access to and mobility within the labour market should be seen as an effective means of building a broad alliance among the working class.

The effects of globalization on labour market institutions have placed trade union leaders in an advantageous position to be recognised as the purveyors of social cohesion and democratic changes in the region. As in the Nordic countries, and certainly evident in the early formation of Caribbean trade unions, labour leaders need to express an ideological agenda that places labour as a central player in the development process.

The modern trade union needs to transcend the boundaries of the workplace to become active partners in the pursuit of common interests and shared values among the communities. The 21st century union leaders must understand this and be able to impart such knowledge to the public in ways that point to the relevance and importance of a modern trade union movement as quintessential to reversing the growth of economic inequality and generating a higher quality of life for the majority of Caribbean peoples.
In the developing world today, finding employment opportunities are still challenging to a nation's people, primarily the younger generation. The need for trade union representation of these workers regardless of age, gender, ethnic diversity, religious and cultural backgrounds, has increased as challenges continue to rise.

Growing up in a Caribbean Country, the school system was the first preparatory institution for the world of work. While there may have been subjects taught such as Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, the Sciences, Physical Education, and Home Economics amongst others, subjects such as Industrial Relations or Worker Welfare which teach worker rights, employer-employee relations and the grievance procedure are usually not a part of the curriculum until tertiary level and even then they are not a mandatory part of the curriculum.

When a young person enters the world of work, we learn to obey the Master/Boss. The working class theorist, Karl Marx rightly conceptualized that Society is divided into Classes; and it is only when one becomes an employee or employer and one begins to face the challenges of managing an employee or handling instructions from an employer, that one begins to understand this concept of classes with different interests.

Trade Unions started up in the Caribbean around the early 1900’s while the British Guiana Labour Union (BGLU) was the first to be legally registered in 1919. The organization did not struggle for national independence, but concentrated its campaigning on social matters and suffrage rights. The BGLU took the initiative for cooperation between trade unions in the Caribbean region. At the 1926 BGLU convention, the British Guiana and West Indian Trade Union Confederation was founded. In 1945, BG&WITUC became the Caribbean Labour Congress1.

But where do Trade Unions come in?

With the constant struggle to obtain the respect of workers’ rights, better working conditions, higher wages/salaries, the provision of personal protective equipment, equal work for equal pay, gender equality and many other terms and conditions, workers needs a strong force to represent them. A force that can make a difference for workers, a force which understands the rights of workers and does not compromise on the interests of workers.

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Some of the most vibrant Politicians in the Caribbean were groomed by Trade Unions. It is here they gained invaluable public speaking, negotiation and other social skills which have proven invaluable to their development in the political arena. Youth involvement in the trade union is therefore critical for succession planning and towards the future growth and development of our region and our trade unions.
But what about the young people, how do Unions benefit them?

The involvement of Youth in the Trade Union Movement promotes not only benefits for the Union but also for the young people themselves. Young people can benefit from Trade Unions in several ways. Some of which are as follows:

- There are specific issues and benefits for young people included in the Union's Collective Bargaining Agreements.
- Training and apprenticeship programs or active employment policies are bargained for as a way of developing the Young worker.
- Unions are visible and accessible through union representatives and field secretaries at the work sites to defend the rights and interests of young workers.
- Young workers are encouraged to support activities and achievements of the Union to foster awareness of workers’ struggles through the observation of anniversaries of marking milestones of the labour movement.
- Young union members are encouraged to develop and organize activities to promote awareness of Workers’ issues.
- A quota for the participation of young workers is set for training programmes and decision-making bodies. Young workers are elected/selected to serve on high bodies and committees of Unions.
- Young members are encouraged to participate in Union organising and campaigning to develop an appreciation of their occupation.
- Young workers are given the opportunity to share their ideas and views at Workshops and Meetings of the Union since they bring enthusiasm and fresh ideas. They love to work when they are appreciated.

While youths benefit tremendously from Union representation and participation, they must also keep in mind that they are the leaders of tomorrow. This means they need to become the best workers advocate for the purpose of continuity and steadfast progress in Trade Unionism and workers’ solidarity.

Young people are integral to the development and continuity of Trade Unionism in any Country, Region, or on any Continent. Once they receive the appropriate guidance and develop their skills, young unionists will definitely become great leaders. Trade unions are institutions which provide fundamental preparation of young workers to be informed leaders and trade union representatives for tomorrow’s world of work.

Introduction

Those remarks, though not identifying the trade unions in Barbados, could legitimately have been made at that time by any Government Minister in the Region - not only with respect to the private sector, narrowly defined to exclude trade union - but in respect to the region’s trade union movement for the movement has been a contributor to the inhibitions preventing access to benefits provided under the CARIFORUM - European Union Economic Partnership Agreement as well as potential benefits not out-rightly identified. In fact it could be asserted that the region’s trade union movement (TUM) has not done anything significant to force the pace of implementation even of the easiest of programmes or processes identified in the Agreement.

In this regard nothing much appears to have changed since 2011.

The Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between the European Union and the CARIFORUM element of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) grouping (there are different EPAs for the different groupings of the ACP) was signed Bridgetown on October 15, 2008. The CARIFORUM/EU EPA is a legally binding document - a treaty - encompassing inter alia respective outcomes, decisions and principles of the Millennium Development Goals, the 2006 Ministerial Declaration of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (UN ECOSOC), principal International Labour Organization instruments and Decent Work Declaration and, importantly, the Cotonou Agreement.¹

Among the main overarching aims and objectives of the CARIFORUM/ACP-EU EPA are: eradicating poverty [in all its multi-dimensional aspects]

¹. The CARIFORUM-EU EPA incorporates the Cotonou Agreement subject to the caveat contained in Article 241 of the EPA
including achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); achieving sustainable development; and, supporting the regional integration project with a view to it contributing towards the gradual integration of regional states into the world economy - and along the way requires that the process of globalization be given a stronger social dimension.

The provisions call also on the Parties to respect human rights and the rule of law as well as to practice good governance.

Lack of capacity and unwillingness on the part of the trade union movement - inertia - to engage in the process can only be concluded as the main reasons for the movement’s enduring failure to secure - or even pursue - these benefits.

In both of these seminal treaties (the Cotonou Agreement and the CARIFORUM/EU EPA) civil society organizations, within which the trade union movement falls, are identified as actors and partners to whom specific responsibilities and benefits are assigned.²

**Methodology**

The major provisions of the EPA - alternatively referred to as the three (3) pillars of the Agreement - are: Development Cooperation (financial & technical assistance); Trade Dimension (trade cooperation and arrangements); and, Political Dimensions (political dialogue) - are to be achieved through a variety of processes including political dialogue, development cooperation, and deeper economic and trade relations.

**Identified Benefits accruing to the Trade Union Movement²**

The CARIFORUM/EU Economic Partnership Agreement deliberately provides for the strengthening of civil society Organizations, as a necessary precursor for their effective participation in the EPA process. The **Social Aspects** arrangements, amounting to six relatively brief sections, have as their main focus poverty eradication and ILO-approved sustainable employment practices - consistent with the aims and objects of the Labour Movement. The challenge of effective consultation and monitoring - especially in relation to trade unions, non-state actors, and the private sector is also addressed.

- **In Article 191 – Objectives and Multilateral Commitments** - the mere fact of identifying core labour standards and certain other ILO instruments, Principles and Rights and Decent Work provides another forum of redress for the trade union movement.

- **In Article 192 - Protection and Right to Regulate** - the fact that the Agreement recognises the sovereignty of Cariforum States to regulate social development arrangements implies that such noble and desirable arrangements arm the TUM with the moral authority to insist on the introduction of appropriate and efficacious social development policies in jurisdictions where they do not exist as well as to seek to strengthen arrangements in jurisdiction which are in need of such.

- **In Article 193 - Upholding levels of Protection** - Discourages the dilution of the protection provided by domestic social and labour legislation as well as any derogation or failure to apply such legislation.

- **In Article 194 - Regional Integration** - strong and sustainable cohesion policies and measures to promote decent work cannot be successful without the effective involvement of labour as well as consultation between labour and the private sector.

- **Article 195 – Consultation and Monitoring Process** - recognises and promotes participative process and

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² The CARIFORUM-EU EPA incorporates the Cotonou Agreement subject to the caveat contained in Article 241 of the EPA

³ CA signifies the Cotonou Agreement while EPA denotes the CARIFORUM –EU EPA.
institutions such as the Social Partnership thereby legitimising the principle on which they are based, their general composition and, generally, their modus operandi. It needs to recognise that effective monitoring cannot be undertaken - cannot be performed - from a distance, without the requisite knowledge, and without intimate involvement.

• In Article 196 - Cooperation - again the importance and desirability of collaboration with civil society Organizations, on social and labour matters, is recognised by the framers of the Agreement, and lauded.

While a great deal of focus is placed on Chapter 5 containing the Social Aspects provisions, it is, essential – for trade unions to be au fait with the contents of the Cotonou Agreement (2000) which is not only subsumed into the EPA but expresses in fuller sentiments, and captures in richer details crucial principles and provisions. In so doing, some identified benefits for the trade union movement are to be found in the following articles:

• Article 1 - Concerned with the Development Pillar - contains detailed provisions relating to the objectives of the Agreement including the identification of existing pathways to achieving them.

So too “sustained economic growth, increasing employment, and the equitable distribution of the fruits of growth” are identified as being amongst the objectives of the Partnership.

• Article 2 - Also relating to Development - Clearly sets out participation by non-State actors as a fundamental principle of ACP-EU cooperation as well as indicates that after NSAs are to participate in determining development strategies and be co-owners thereof.

• Article 4 - In relation to Trade - the Agreement, having recognised the complementary role of and potential for contributions by NSAs, goes on to stipulate that where appropriate: NSAs be informed and involved in consultation on cooperation policies and strategies in areas that concern or directly affect them or where they have a comparative advantage.

• Art 4 - Dealing with General Support – stipulates, inter alia, that where appropriate non-state actors be provided with financial resources, under the conditions laid down in the Agreement in order to support local development processes; be involved in the implementation of cooperation projects and programmes in critical areas in order to reinforce their capacities; and support in respect to promoting strategic alliances.

• Article 6.1. c - Relating to General Provisions - defines non-state actors and trade unions.

• Article 8 - In relation to the Political Dimensions - asserts that representatives of civil society Organizations shall be associated in political dialogue.

• Article 10 - Relating also to Political Dimensions - continues to put the case for “greater involvement of an active and organised civil society and the private sector are seen as contributing to the maintenance and consolidation of a stable and democratic political environment”

• Article 7 & 8.7... call respectively for the strengthening of community (i.e. civil society) Organizations as well as demanding, requiring, inter alia, their involvement in the establishment of consultation mechanisms including channels of communication and in projects and programmes that concern them or where these actors have a comparative advantage;
• Article 8.7 & 10.1… respectively set out and reinforce the involvement of NSAs in relation to the promotion of robust political dialogue, and the pursuit of sound governance in concert with an active, organized and effective civil society.

• Article 14 - complaints apparatus - while there is no Ombudsman or arbitral body to look into complaints regarding the failure of Governments (as well as others) to adhere to their commitments, the Joint ACP-EC institutions (viz. ACP-EC Council of Ministers, ACP-EC Committee of Ambassadors, and ACP-EC Joint Parliamentary Assembly) are there to assess progress in implementing EPA provisions. Additionally, the ACP-EC Joint Parliamentary Assembly can call upon Parties to account for their policies towards non-State actors. There are also opportunities for NSAs to attend Assembly meetings as observers. Finally, the European Economic and Social Committee oversee the involvement of economic and social actors in ACP-EC cooperation.

• It needs to be noted that the quality of participation by Non-state actors (NSAs), including the level of financial support allocated, is amongst the performance indicators used in the review process!

• Article 19.3 - Cooperation Strategies/Development Strategies – stipulates that “Governments and non-state actors in each ACP country shall initiate consultations on country development strategies and community support thereto.”

• Article 33.5 also speaks, inter alia, to the fostering “of non-State actors and the development of their capacities; and to strengthen structures for information, dialogue and consultation between them and the national authorities…”

The region’s trade union movement could not have negotiated, or hoped for, a more progressive and generous agreement than the combined Cotonou Agreement/CARIFORUM-EU EPA. While the provisions relating to NSAs are innovative and far-reaching, it is the bold exploitation of the provisions, and the creative leveraging of complementary opportunities, akin to rolling back the limits of the Economic Partnership Agreement where almost infinite benefits could lay.

Notwithstanding, it should be considered that, the EPA is a Treaty that reflects provisions acceptable to all or the majority of the CARIFORUM-EC Parties - the least common denominators so to speak. That being the case it is the responsibility of the actors to seek to extend towards these minimal provisions.

Potential Benefits for the Trade Union Movement

Trade unions need to acknowledge, and promote relentlessly, that the lives of those they represent neither begin at the entrance to the workplace, nor do they end at the exit of the workplace. Hence they need to extend the frontiers of their interest, involvement and representation.

The quality of life of the worker as well as that of his/her family is impacted - for better or worse - by the quality of life at the workplace. Consequently, trade unions must improve the quality of their representation as well as insist on extending their representation agenda beyond immediate workplace issues to include for example: public and personal safety; personal health and availability of quality health service; affordable housing; safe and reliable public transportation; lifelong education and training; sound governance; efficient public institutions; protection of the environment; transparency and accountability in public life; affordable living costs; as well as undertake cooperative economic enterprises.

Given the regional failed political leadership that has at times disappointed, dismayed and disaffected us over the last 25 years or so - resulting in economic and financial challenges, social decay and pan-Caribbean societal regression, the trade union movement needs to conceptualize a new approach to national economic management will be novel and no doubt will be resisted by the political leadership as well as their traditional capitalist allies.

However, as I see it, either they take the outstretched hand and come on board and help right the ship of state or we all come to ruin separately, selfishly, short-sightedly and needlessly!

The Social Partnership in Barbados, emanating from the 1992 - 94 economic challenges, offers a benign model, not nearly as radical as is proposed above, of an alternative approach to achieving economic growth and obtaining social development gains after a precipitous and calamitous economic performance by the then government.

Given the dire straits of the English-speaking Caribbean at this time nothing less than a radical recasting of the respective models will suffice.

The CARIFORUM/EU EPA has the potential to contribute towards the trade union movement achieving an enlarged agenda (as suggested immediately above) by the Union creatively and resolutely leveraging the provisions of the Agreement; including very much needed substantial capacity-building support. Put another way: The Region’s trade union movement needs, with haste, to utilize the opportunities for funding, technical expertise, and inspired partnership provided under the CARIFORUM/EU Economic Partnership Agreement to affect the radical turnaround necessary.

The CARIFORUM/EU Economic Partnership
Agreement, having incorporated the Cotonou Agreement, is a deeply cross-cutting instrument impinging inter alia on the political, economic, developmental, environmental, legal, and cultural aspects of our Region. As such it is difficult to easily identify, and neatly pigeonhole, actual and potential benefits to the trade union movement that fall under respective named heads.

Notwithstanding this logistical challenge I have decided to use the same three pillars identified above: Trade Dimension (trade cooperation and arrangements); Political Dimension (wide forms of continuous dialogues and interaction); and, Development Cooperation (financial & technical assistance) under which I will now place possible or consequential benefits as oppose to actual benefits already identified above under that head) arising from the trade union movement leveraging or exploiting the provisions.

Development Cooperation (financial and technical assistance)

- EPA Article 1 (Objectives) as well as CA Article 1 (Objectives & Principles) is largely consistent with the principles, aims and objects of the trade union movement. Such alignment should make for easier dialogue, negotiation, common identification of goals and achievement of goals.
- Obtain an acceptable and standard method for regular consultation on the monitoring of EU funding (CA 19.3).
- Promote enhancement of existing mechanisms for social dialogue; alternatively, promote the introduction of social dialogue mechanisms where none exists.
- Promote reviews of the status of national social and labour legislation as well as best labour practices.
- Promote reviews of the quality and extent of national social safety nets with a view to their improvement where necessary.
- Acquire the wherewithal to effectively monitor the social aspects of the CARIFORUM/EU EPA (revitalize/establish education and training sessions/opportunities with a view to strengthening substantially the knowledge and expertise of trade union staff and members).
- Obtain capacity-building support in critical areas with a view to reinforcing organizational and representational capabilities.

Political Dimension (extensive and on-going dialogues and meetings)

- Establish a modus operandi – a memorandum of understanding – setting out clearly how national Governments and the trade union movement will relate to each other in relation to the relevant provisions of the CARIFORUM/EU Partnership Agreement (e.g. National Authorising Officer; Regional Authorising Officer; representation on COTED & COSHOD; a fair and reliable method of accessing funding under the EDF; criteria for membership of the Committee of Experts; methodology for the trade union movement to identify matters of interest; etc.).
- Promote a reliable and standard method for regular consultation and monitoring of EU funded CARIFORUM development projects, etc. (Article 19.3).
- Promote/pursue the desirability of converting the English-speaking Caribbean as a single telephonic area resulting in a single country code and local calling costs.
- Leverage the goodwill and support of EU actors with a view to obtaining more progressive social and labour legislation, identified by the region's trade union movement.
- Promote the conduct of audits to ascertain the state of the core labour standards in each CARIFORUM state.
- Engage Government on ways to reduce income inequality.
- Promote/pursue the desirability of converting the English-speaking Caribbean as a single telephonic area resulting in a single country code and local calling costs.
- Engage Government, along with the Private Sector, on general price reduction coupled with improving competitiveness.
- Promote/support the appointment of a non-state actor Liaison Officer in each EU Delegation in the Region.
- Promote/seek the identification of the National Authorising Officer as well as the Regional Authorising Officer.
- Establish a modus operandi – a memorandum of understanding – setting out clearly how these officers and the trade union movement will relate to each other.
- Promote the conduct of audits to ascertain the state of participative democracy in each CARIFORUM state.
- Promote a review of, and seek a meaningful review of public-private partnerships as an appropriate business and economic development model.

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4 Benefits – actual and potential – may appear under more than one head.
Conclusions

In March 2016, the Caribbean Congress of Labour disclosed it was embarking on a “strategic planning meeting in an effort to put in place the structures and strategies needed to maximize its impact as the regional voice of working people...The objective of the meeting is to design a proactive strategy to enable the CCL to address effectively the challenges faced by the labour movement and defend the CCL.”

Trade unions in the region have for a long time, short-changed themselves by being ignorant of, or deliberately ignoring, the favourable provisions for consultation available in, for instance Lomé IV (2000) and more recently Chapter 5 of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement (ACP-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (2000)).

Fortunately, given the number of years left of the life of the CARIFORUM/EU Economic Partnership Agreement, Caribbean trade unions still have time, having been recognised as legitimate partners - along with the private sector and other NSAs - to redeem themselves by creatively, relentlessly and forcefully asserting their rights, accessing benefits, and participating to the fullest extent possible as provided for under the current instrument.

It cannot be emphasised often enough that trade unions need to assert their right to engage in consultations, to generally interface with Government and to take advantage of the benefits - actual and potential - contained in Cotonou/CARIFORUM-EU EPA. Yet to do so effectively requires ability and capacity.

A warning: It needs to be considered, that the private sector’s interests and concerns are being coordinated by the regional trade and investment promotion agency, Caribbean Export. While there is no corresponding dedicated institution, as yet, to assist the trade union movement.

Also, it needs to be examined that the envisioned partners of the Agreement - the private sector, government and non-state actors - compete for funds largely from the same source. Experience has shown that the trade union movement can be shunted between the National Authorising Officer and the Regional Authorising Officer only to be informed by the local (national) government officials, that the funding is needed for some other competing use. It is clear that an alternative funding arrangement is required.

Trade Dimension (economic cooperation & trade arrangements)

• Promote and pursue a deeper working relationship between Labour and the Private Sector.

• Employers and their Organizations in particular, but the private sector in general, in collaboration with the trade union movement are to be engaged in the search for a more equitable distribution of the fruits of growth (see Article 1 Para. 3 of Cotonou).

• Seek a meaningful review of public-private partnerships as an appropriate business and economic model.

• Seek/promote a review of the existing form of globalization as an appropriate economic and development model for the region.

• Engage the Private Sector, along with Government, on reducing prices across the economy coupled with improving competitiveness.

• Promote/pursue the desirability of converting the English-speaking Caribbean as a single telephonic area resulting in a single country code and local calling costs.
NEVER LET A SERIOUS CRISIS GO TO WASTE: SOME THOUGHTS ON UNION RENEWAL AND PUBLIC SERVICE SECTOR UNIONS IN THE CARIBBEAN

Sandra Massiah, Sub-regional Secretary for the Caribbean – Public Services International

[The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of Public Services International (PSI).]

Without a doubt we are facing crises. We are overwhelmed by them. The financial, food, economic and environmental crises that started in 2007/8 and continue even today stem from the extremely rapid pace of globalisation – a neoliberal globalisation. We saw it coming. We held countless conferences, seminars and workshops about it and the possible effects. We didn’t, or couldn’t, imagine the life it would take on and the speed at which it would tear through our lives.

First the attack was on those unions that represented workers in the private sector. Sadly, some public sector unions in many countries felt ‘protected’ and did not speak out on those attacks, if their members were not in that workplace and even if those workers provided public services.

Now, the neoliberals are viciously attacking public service sector unions. Their philosophy is that government is inherently inefficient and that services are best provided through the market. Neoliberals don’t give up. They pursue their ideology and their positions with vim and vigour.

What are public services?

Generally, people view health and education as the main public services. And others talk about social services. But in fact public services are diverse and can include the arts and culture, transportation, airlines, air traffic control, banking, food subsidies, forestry, prisons, telecommunications, extractive industries etc...

The quotation attributed to Martin Niemöller, the Protestant pastor comes to mind:

“First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out—Because I was not a Socialist. Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out—Because I was not a Trade Unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—Because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.”
“Never let a serious crisis go to waste.”
“Public services are those which are universally provided to the public and available equally to all; they affect life, safety and the public welfare and are vital to commercial and economic development; they involve regulatory or policy-making functions; the service is incompatible with the profit motive or cannot be effectively or efficiently delivered through market mechanisms.”

Our experiences in the Caribbean clearly point to and demonstrate the value of public services. Public services transformed the quality of life for many in the post-colonial period. And after independence these public services (taken for granted by many) created a strong middle class. The underlying principles for modern public services are mutual support across all communities and shared social objectives.

Over the years, prosperity seems to have created a selfishness in Caribbean societies that almost mimics the attitudes of some people in developed economies – the attitude that has been dubbed “what’s in it for me”. The state, through the provision of public services has played an important role in the economies of those countries that we now consider “developed”. And now having achieved that status, it seems that some who have prospered as a result now want to kick away the ladder. The neoliberals promote a philosophy of ‘survival of the fittest’.

Especially in times of crisis we need public services. High quality public services are key to strong sustainable societies. They provide opportunities for growth and development. They are critical to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as the realisation of goals contained in global agreements made in late 2015. (The Financing for Development Conference and the Paris Climate Change Agreement). Public Services International and other global union federations played key roles in consultations that influenced the various outcomes.

So what’s the role of public service sector unions?

In the Caribbean, there is a long tradition of active, strong public service sector unions. The oldest in the English-speaking Caribbean is the Jamaica Civil Service Association (JCSA) established on May 6, 1919. Many started out as civil service associations, but later branched out to cover the full range of workers who deliver public services. Throughout the years and true to the definition and role of trade unions, public service sector trade unions in the Caribbean played an active role in the political process related to public services:

1. They represented members by seeking to improve their working conditions;
2. They promoted a high level of professionalism, relying on the experience and advice of members on how best the services can be run;
3. As part of the wider trade union movement, they promoted the development of public services to improve and enhance the lives of working people and their families;
4. They were political actors, sometimes forming close relationships with and in some instances, giving birth to political parties.

Caribbean public service sector unions have been active in political debates on public services and national development. They have promoted pride in providing public services. They have played a leading role in making our societies better.

The future of public services

And what will the public service of the 21st century look like? Undoubtedly public services cannot be unchanging. They need to deal effectively with a constantly and rapidly changing environment. Some changes are as a result of changing politics: fewer resources as a result of reduced financial resources; the current crises and policies of global institutions that impose their will on regional institutions and local governments. Some changes are also internal: some services may be ineffective or badly managed; the presence of corruption; or political interference in regulatory functions.

This implies that Caribbean public service sector unions (like their global counterparts) must be “fit for purpose”, remain relevant and be sustainable in changing times. There must be a clear and common

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1. Public Services International is a global trade union federation representing 20 million working women and men who deliver vital public services in 150 countries. PSI champions human rights, advocates for social justice and promotes universal access to quality public services. PSI works with the United Nations system and in partnership with labour, civil society and other Organizations.
2. Quality public services are a human right and such services can only be delivered by workers who are well-trained and imbued with the public sector ethos; with quality working conditions and with resources which enable users to expect quality every time.
3. The other two oldest public service sector unions in the Caribbean are the Public Service Union of Belize (PSU of Belize), formed on March 22, 1922 and the Guyana Public Service Union (GPSU) on June 8, 1923.
“We need to build capacity”
vision – not only at a national level, but spread across the wider Caribbean. In this globalised world, local problems are not solved locally. There are Caribbean-wide and global dimensions to the issues. That vision must speak to the development and maintenance of equitable societies, the improvement and expansion of quality public services, and the promotion of democracy.

The trade union movement has a critical role to play in leading and inspiring society.

It has a responsibility not only to its members but to all of society. Trade unions do not constitute a “special interest group”. The interests of members are not separate from those of the entire society. Workers who provide public services are also users of those services. In particular, public service sector unions have a direct working relationship with advisers and policy-makers in government and governmental institutions – nationally, across the wider Caribbean and globally. These characteristics point to a key role that public service sector unions must play in national – and regional – development. Is there an understanding and appreciation of the important role that public service sector unions must play in the regional integration movement? Are Caribbean public service sector unions making themselves ready to play that role?

There’s a new normal and it ain’t business as usual!

Many union leaders are overwhelmed. Trade union density is too low. Resources are few. The cries are many and they are getting louder and louder.

“The Caribbean is marginalised. The Caribbean is between a rock and a hard place.”

“We need to change. We need to be relevant.”

“Union dues are too low.”

“Members are not as active as they used to be. They don’t come to meetings.”

“Government won’t listen.”

“Unions are too aggressive.”

“Unions aren’t militant enough.”

“Everybody is using the debt as an excuse.”

“Where will the money come from?”

“We have to find other ways to sustain ourselves. We can’t depend on members’ dues alone.”

“We must have a succession plan.”

“We need to build capacity.”

“We have to think of the national interests.”

We’ve heard these and many more comments like them repeatedly. They are all relevant and require serious thought, careful analysis as well as decisive and meaningful action.

The stakes are high; really high. The current global system of capitalism is not sustainable. In the meantime, collective bargaining is no longer as public service sector unions know it. There is a developing practice of using a system of Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) that seems to be relegating the collective bargaining process to the history books.

There are two and three – sometimes more – tiers of public service sector workers and an increase in precarious work. In some territories there are a different kind of public service with “managers” who want to import private sector practices and systems, hook line and sinker. Consequently, public service sector unions are mired in grievances. Staff, officers and leaders spend 90% of their time dealing with grievances. When do they get time to think and plan?

In 2013, Dan Gallin, former general secretary of the IUF, made a presentation to Greek trade unionists on Repoliticising unionism. “I believe that the multiple crises we are facing in society are ultimately the result of the failures of our movement, and that we cannot effectively deal with those economic, social and political crises unless we overcome our own crisis first.”

In essence, he points to 3 things:

• Trade unions have lost their political allies;

• They have lost their periphery. He describes this as the network of Organizations that deal with social life – credit unions, newspapers, radio, thrift societies, etc

• Socialism, true socialism, was discredited.

He suggests that the issues that face us all are ideological, political and Organizational. There is a resounding ring of truth to this in the Caribbean setting.

There are calls for public service sector unions to be more effective. What we are talking about is change. And in a number of cases, drastic change. We need to understand what changes must be made in order to make the unions better able to deal with the
various external challenges. What are the structural changes that are needed to develop internal union strength? What about the internal challenges; the internal crises?

The opportunities

There is no doubt that the trade union movement is in a crisis. That is the experience all over the world. Let me hasten to add that there are some positive signs in some countries and in some sectors. But taken overall, the movement is in crisis.

“You never let a serious crisis go to waste. And what I mean by that it’s an opportunity to do things you think you could not do before.” Rahm Emanuel

This quote can be interpreted in different ways. I am looking at it in its most basic and straightforward meaning. With crises also come opportunities; opportunities for creative responses and to renew and re-build. There is a lot of talk about trade union renewal.

Almost every union is talking about developing a strategic plan and the need to “think outside the box”. This is admirable and even desirable. These efforts take time, commitment, careful thought and planning. And they require resources. The major failing of many a strategic plan is that no resources were allocated to make it happen. So invariably the consultations are held, the plan is written— it is approved – all with good intentions. Then there is supposed to be the follow-up. But no resources are allocated. And then some people start to do some things. But sometimes it’s just an exercise in rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic.

The crises we face provide opportunities to ask a myriad of questions and to work hard and with imagination and creativity to find the answers. For example:

• Should the unions be organised by sectors or by the traditional branches or divisions?
• How can public service sector unions build stronger linkages between collective bargaining, national policies, and organising?

• How can public service sector unions position themselves to grow and withstand competition for members from other unions, including those that operate in the private sector?
• What kind of leadership is key for the sustainability of public service sector unions? And here I am not talking about the individual. I’m talking about leadership – not management. I’m referring to the various levels of leadership in the Organization and the Organization itself.

All these really lead to, is the need for deep discussion about what public service sector unions are, what they do, what they should be and what they should do. In other words, there must be a shared vision of what kind of public service sector union members, staff and potential members want.

Whatever new model of trade unionism we develop, I share the view that it must satisfy four criteria:

1. A strong focus on building the capacity of members and helping them to realise their dreams;
2. Having a voice on, and the ability to influence broad social issues;
3. Reflection of the three pillars of unionism (democracy, independence and solidarity);
4. Trade unions must look and work beyond borders.

A team of young workers from PSI affiliated unions in the Caribbean has started a trade union renewal project. They decided to work on and develop their thoughts and positions that focus on the future of public service sector unions. They have started the conversation among Caribbean public service sector unions. They conducted surveys and interviews, engaged in desk research and debates. And they followed the trade union renewal process started by a number of unions in the US and Canada.

The team agrees that while increasing membership is a key component of the renewal process, it is much more than that. Trade union renewal involves and includes the following:

• Organizational Innovation and Change
• Restructuring the unions
• Industrial Relations practices and regulations that affect trade union structure
• Collective bargaining models
• Organising and mobilising workers

4 The International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers’ Associations (IUF) is an international federation of trade unions representing workers employed in

• agriculture and plantations
• the preparation and manufacture of food and beverages
• hotels, restaurants and catering services
• all stages of tobacco processing

5 https://newunionism.wordpress.com/2013/07/05/rebuilding-unionism-from-below-by-dan-gallin/ accessed May 12, 2016
- Communications, especially the use of Information and Communications technologies
- Trade union education and training for members and activists
- Women workers
- Young workers
- Sectoral work
- Decent work and precarious working conditions
- Equality, equity and diversity issues
- Building alliances

Two key target groups in this process are women and young workers. They must be involved in all aspects of trade union work. There are some positive developments with more women serving in leadership positions and on decision-making bodies. But there is still resistance. We have not yet achieved gender equality in trade unions. In a number of cases, young members are still relegated to the sidelines. They are given the tasks of organising the sports and cultural events and the so-called outreach programmes that amount to no more than charity work. Trade union renewal provides an opportunity to change the status quo and to change it drastically.

Effective, practical trade union education and training is key. Public service sector unions must invest in education and training programmes that do more than create a rank and file that acts by routine. The education and training programmes must be designed to build a team of activists that defend workers’ rights, which defend and promote public services as well as work towards an equitable society. Members must know the facts, they must understand the principles of trade unionism, and they must be able to make the linkages to what is happening in people’s everyday lives. When members understand and can make the linkages, when they are committed, they become more active.

Unions now have an opportunity to use new or innovative collective bargaining models. For unions that used collective bargaining for wages and salaries as a selling point for joining the union, the current situation creates serious problems.

Organising the unorganised. There are many workers delivering public services who are unorganised. These potential members are looking for representation and there are opportunities for unions to make changes to be attractive and relevant to these potential members. All unions campaign for full-time employment. The reality is far from this and increasingly so in the public service sector where there are part-time, temporary and even contract workers. In this environment, can public service sector unions effectively organise and meet the real needs of these part-time or temporary workers? Are

Public service sector unions must build alliances with those who share their concerns.

there examples of successful strategies that unions can adapt to the Caribbean situation?

Information and communications technologies provide even more opportunities for contact, engagement, education and training, campaigning and growth. ICT, especially social media, is a tool that can inform, educate and mobilise workers to act. Developing internal expertise and capacity in ICT can expand the reach of public service sector unions.

Public service sector unions must build alliances with those who share their concerns. They must truly be in solidarity with people. They must also recognise the value of working with civil society actors on issues such as climate justice; gender equality; human rights; the rights of migrants and refugees; trade agreements; the rights of the LGBTQ community and the wide range of issues that affect people. Public service sector unions have a distinct advantage in that they already have a seat at the table with national policy makers.

Local and global solidarity. National public service sector unions can build even stronger links with their Caribbean and global federations and confederations. Using that relationship, they can increase their influence in national, regional and global spaces.

We’ll always have the threats around us. There will always be one crisis or another. Focusing only on the dangers and wallowing in despair won’t make things better. Public service sector unions must take full advantage of their seat at the national table and their regional and global connections to fully participate in the debates and discussions on national and regional development. They must build visibility, use evidence to substantiate their views and positions and propose alternatives. Their credibility then goes a long way in influencing policy.

The team of young workers has started an important process. Their efforts have spurred some public service sector unions in the Caribbean to seriously engage in trade union renewal. It is a work in progress.
“Caribbean workers’ and the Caribbean labour movement have played a pivotal role in the political, social and economic development of the Region.”
Caribbean workers’ and the Caribbean labour movement have played a pivotal role in the political, social and economic development of the Region. Starting from the beginning of the last century the Region’s workers were at the forefront of virtually every advancement for equity and social justice from Guyana in the south to the Bahamas and Bermuda in the north and Belize in the west. The sacrifices of the labour movement are written in many cases in the blood of those early stalwarts. Agitators for workers’ rights, for social justice, for political representation and for equity were threatened, beaten and incarcerated.

The fruit of those sacrifices are evident in the rights that are often taken for granted by workers in the twenty-first century and society at large. In the late 1950s and 1960s, the influence of the labour movement reached its pinnacle. Labour parties were dominant in most countries in the Caribbean. In some countries, labour parties closely affiliated to active labour unions, formed the Government and the Opposition. In the case of one country, St. Kitts and Nevis, at one point the Cabinet of the country was almost exclusively encompassed the executive of the St Kitts and Nevis Trades and Labour Union.

A discernible trend started in the 1970s and 1980s, when although political parties kept the word “labour” in their names there was a growing distance between the leadership of political parties and the labour movement. In fact, in some cases it could be said that workers became a mobilizing convenience for political parties every election cycle. On the other hand, the policies of those same parties started to reflect more and more alignment with forces that did not have the best interests of workers at heart. It is possible to detect two reinforcing trends in the Caribbean labour market that have led to a diminishing of the influence of the labour movement in shaping the future of the Region.

First is the process of globalization, which has fundamentally changed the environment in which Caribbean workers operate and continues to do so. The main characteristics of this process that are::

- Increasing liberalization of markets
- Freer flow of capital
- Rapid advance of technology
- Global communication
- Rapid changes in customer preferences
- Flexible manufacturing
- Globalised manufacturing
- New forms of enterprises
- New forms of work organization
- Concern for social issues
- Concern for sustainable development
- Marginalisation

The factors have served, to unbalance and weaken the bargaining position of workers’ and their Organizations. As markets have become liberalised and accompanied by freer flow of capital, flexible manufacturing, globalised manufacturing and new forms of work Organization, it is becoming increasingly difficult for workers’ Organizations to maintain their strength. This is evident in a number of ways. In most countries, there is evidence that membership in trade unions is declining. More ominously, the gap between workers and owners of capital is widening. Evidence also suggests (as articulated by experts such as Nobel Laureate, Paul Krugman) that most of the growth in productivity in world has been as a result of human capital; in other words, the contribution of workers.

Within that global context, the manifestation of these trends in the Caribbean has been a shift in government policy that is actually increasing the vulnerability of workers. Governments are seeking to attract investment, especially foreign direct investments and many in the Caribbean are being
forced to make structural adjustments, often at the behest of the international actors. In order to comply with the orthodoxy of the international system, workers' interests are compromised. Studies have alluded to the “race to the bottom” as Governments grant concessions and sometimes create conditions that circumscribe workers’ rights (for example special economic zones or free zones). Often too, the process of structural adjustment impacts workers, who are already more vulnerable, harder than it does owners of capital.

These structural conditions, have been compounded by the changing nature of the Caribbean worker. The observation can be made that younger Caribbean workers do not have the same strong commitment to joint struggle that their parents and grandparents have. Half a century ago, there was almost a natural inclination for a person getting a job to want to be in a union. However, the unions were more actively canvassing and mobilizing new workers. The worker also recognized his or her vulnerability and saw the benefit of solidarity in numbers.

The worker of the 21st century has benefited from the social progress, much of which was built on the battles fought and won by the labour movement, that has resulted in a more educated, more individualistic worker. This worker believes more and more that her or his destiny is in his or her own hands.

The irony is, with a system that is increasingly being stacked against the fundamental interests of workers, trade unions are an imperative for workers. We can reasonably expect that as small open economies, the countries of the Caribbean will be engaged in even fiercer competition for investments and markets. We can expect that governments will be tempted to compromise more on fundamental issues that protect the well-being and quality of life of workers; including economic policy and social programmes.

In these circumstances, trade unions have a critical role to play in ensuring that the benefits fought for and won are not lost and that the future of the Caribbean worker and Caribbean society is protected.

The other side of this coin is that it is necessary for trade unions as institutions and trade union leaders to conduct some serious introspection to ensure that they are properly oriented for the future to the imperative ahead.
Trinidad and Tobago

According to Public Services International, “Quality public services, at their best, are the tools used by responsible and democratic governments to serve the best interests of their citizens.

Public administration of services such as health care, education, and utilities promotes equality and the common good, not greater profit for a few. Like all other workers, public employees deserve a fair day’s pay for a fair day’s work, decent working conditions, and respect for their right to free collective bargaining.

Historically, public service regulations excluded women from employment in the public service. This exclusion was especially placed on married women through the ‘marriage bar,’ which also served to discourage single women from getting married and having families.

The removal of the ‘Marriage Bar’ in 1946 was a watershed moment for all women in the civil service. Legally, married women would be recognized equally with men and were to be given the same opportunities as male employees. Nonetheless, negative attitudes towards married women workers continued.

“A Perfect Nuisance” is the title quote of an article written by Vicky Iglikowski on the history of women in the Civil Service. The article refers to the involvement of married women in the civil service in 1947; highlights a quote from a document in the National Archives in the United Kingdom from Her Majesty’s Treasury which says “To us, married women have been, to quote the Treasury – “a perfect nuisance”.

This statement came after the removal of the marriage bar in 1946, and clearly underlines that despite steady, progressive legal change, pervasive sexist attitudes remained barriers to women in the greater part of the 20th century. However, social change was and remains just as important as legal change, if not more so, to obtain equality in working women's lives.

Negative attitudes towards women workers was revealed in a document dated shortly after the Act from 1947-51 stating “Naturally, their home comes first with them, and if their husbands or children are ill, they regard it as their duty to remain at home and look after them”. As a result, despite the removal of the Marriage Bar in the civil service women themselves were still largely expected to retire from work upon marriage.

When one considers the fact that women have progressively become an integral part of the public service, our significant achievements in organizing, collective bargaining and rights with respect to women, the critical area of concern is - why do women remain overrepresented in precarious, low-skilled, low-paid jobs with little prospects for career advancement?

Women in the public service

The experience of women within the trade union movement is similar to working women in the public sector. One study within the Caribbean proffers that “the trade union movement has not evolved to embrace principles of inclusivity and equity within its pyramidal structure. As such, Union women are persistently undermined by the patriarchal values that have governed gender relations within the Movement since the early 1900s” - (Phillips, Roberts and Marsh 2011).

Women's work-life both in the public service and in the trade union movement with regards to occupying
positions of influence and decision-making has been profoundly different to their male counterpart. Women have been paid less while carrying out the same functions, done a lopsided share of the routine work, struggled to adapt themselves to practices shaped by men and agonized over how to turn aside unwanted advances without losing their jobs; while simultaneously fighting to juggle family life demands.

According to Wirth (Wirth 2001, 42-169) “Trade Unions are vehicles that can effectively organize workers and promote gender equality throughout the world of work. Although there has been a feminization of the labour force with more women entering the labour market, yet this increased participation of women in the labour force has not improved the quality of the jobs they perform, nor does it reflect their presence at the leadership level.”

Within the trade union movement itself the prevalence of a “glass ceiling” is obvious in the power dynamics that occur between women and men. This in itself stifles capacity building by maintaining a hierarchical structure that allocates power based on Patriarchy rather than meritocracy.

There are myths that surround women’s advanced participation at leadership level. Some may hold the view that women have made significant strides and are now on the same level as men in the corridors of power in trade unions.

However, this is a myth indeed because a quick survey will show that in unions where men hold the position of general secretary or president, they hold the seat of the power in the Organization. Conversely, where women occupy either role they have little to no true power over the Organization. The seat of power lies with the man holding the top post in the union. More so, few Trade Union Congresses and Centres have women as their Head. Even though it is argued that women have surpassed men in the sphere of education and training.

Research shows that in the public sector globally there is blatant gender segregation. Generally, women dominate a narrow range of occupations and sectors in “caring” and “servicing” work and work which bear considerable likeness to their domestic role. Work in these sectors is deemed as “feminized” and therefore compensation is low. Also, where women have positions of authority in today’s public service the trend is that most often a contract is the modus operandi. These contracts tend to offer fewer benefits and weaker social protection.

With these issues looming over women, unions have struggled for years to ensure that their female members are not overlooked when opportunities for training, and career advancement arise.

New Challenges for Trade Unions
Although trade unions have won many rights and benefits for workers the casualization of work coupled with the precarious nature of the world of work today places new challenges at the feet of the Movement.

The issues of the migrant care and domestic workers who, not by chance are mainly women, and by the very nature of the service they provide are exposed to different forms of violence, have to be at the forefront of renewed Decent Work agendas as part of SDGs 2030 and beyond. Trade unions must campaign for these and other fundamental rights for this vulnerable group.

Decent work also calls for empowerment through an enabling environment facilitated by gender mainstreaming policies both in the public service and in trade unions themselves. These policies must take into account the differences between men and women, and the roles ascribed to men and women in society. There is little argument that even today a working woman still is expected to care for her husband and children and in some instances the elderly family members. Unfortunately, patriarchal antediluvian attitudes continue to shape societal cultural behavior into acceptance of this as the predestined fate of women.

The Journey Towards True Female Empowerment
The contemporary precarious nature of work is directly responsible and reflective in the many grievous underlying issues which affect women such as, gender gap, care gap, quality job/income gaps and the social protection gap. Vinicius Carvalho Pinheiro of the ILO, identified five major gender gaps, which he referred to as the “Gender Lotto” in relation to these gaps and attendant impact on women the following statistics are presented:

It is therefore important to close all these Gaps to ensure that women in relation to men are equitably treated; equity may call for the implementation of special policies designed for women only.

Trade Unions must play a pivotal role in campaigning for the elimination of violence, to which women are more vulnerable. Gender-based violence exhibits unequal power relations between men and women. At the micro level violence against women clearly impacts the workplace negatively through absenteeism, low productivity and at times an unsafe workplace. At the macro level gender based violence increases the demand on social services and therefore siphons scarce resources that could be better spent in other policy areas to enhance the provision of public services.

When women in the public sector are affected

1 Quote from a record on inquiry into subsequent history of women for whom marriage bar had been waived TNA ref:T271/137
by forms of violence on and off the work place the quality of service available to the citizens is lowered, thus negatively impacting the government’s ability to responsibly and efficiently attend to the needs of the people.

If the Union is to propel nations towards the achievement of the seventeen (17) Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, of which goal five (5) and eight (8) bear specific significance to women and decent work, then targeted programs must be utilized through advocacy and strategic collective bargaining. They must also adopt the ratification and implementation of national legislation and ILO conventions to eradicate casualization of work and precarious forms of employment, especially in the public sector.

It has been said that “the hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world”, and rightly so, for women have been responsible for shaping minds and societies for millennia.

Women have demonstrated both physical and mental strength in varied situations which has contributed to advancement in domestic and secular matters. We have earned the right to be treated equal to our male counterparts.

Women must now more than ever, unite and educate ourselves to meet and surmount the many challenges that face us, with the determination to surmount these hindrances and attain certain victory, leaving a legacy for those who come behind us.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LABOUR GAP</th>
<th>STATISTICS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Employment Gap</td>
<td>Participation rate for men of 72%, while the rate for women is 45%.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wages Gap</td>
<td>Women make 23% less than men in the same position.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working Hours Gap</td>
<td>In developing countries combining formal and informal work women work from 9.2 hrs a day on average while men work 8 hours per day.</td>
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<td>Care Gap</td>
<td>Women in developed economies spend on average about twice as much time as men on unpaid care work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Protection Gap</td>
<td>Pensions generally are based on rights acquired while a person is working, which leave women less pensionable” and thus women are 11% less likely than men to receive a pension.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Occupational Segregation Gap</td>
<td>A sample of 102 countries showed that, women remain underrepresented compared to their fair share of employment in clerical and sales professions, “while in managerial and civic leadership positions there is a 50% gap between men and women.”</td>
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“The youth are tomorrow leaders”
As a coordinator for young workers I am afforded the opportunity to interact with my counterparts locally, regionally and internationally. This experience informs that young workers are facing a number of issues within their unions and workplaces such as: not educating themselves in relation to their rights at the workplace; the infrequency of union meetings within their workplace; security of tenure; safety and health at work; regulation of work and training; older persons holding on to positions whether within the union or at the workplace for a very long time and failing to groom younger persons to fill those positions. These are just some of the difficulties which confront young workers. In addition, the myth that trade unions are peopled by older person is debunked by the fact there are a number of young workers who are active in trade unions in Barbados, regionally and internationally.

The trade union movement historically has provided for young workers proof that it represents their interests and has encouraged them to unite for the common cause within their workplaces. Many young workers also have the desire to stand up for what are their rights as workers. As a consequence, there is an expectation on the part of young workers that the trade union movement will educate them about their rights and the laws which regulate the trade union movement and the world of work. In addition, the trade union is expected to be proactive rather than reactive as it relates to protecting young workers from discrimination, unfairness and precarious work.

Young people also expect the trade union to harness their skills and assist them as they mature into progressive activists and leaders.

Joining a trade union organization can be of significant benefit to a young worker who joins a trade union as she would be a part of a collective that strengthens the hands of all workers at the workplace. Some young workers appear not to be sufficiently discerning to see the need for a trade union. It is the belief of some young workers that if they arrive at work on time, meet their deadlines on time and get along well with their colleagues there isn’t a need to join the union. However, in the current working environment young workers have become more vulnerable to precarious working conditions such as temporary work, contract work and privatization. Hence, these are just some of the reasons why young workers should take the step to becoming a trade union member, as the union is the vehicle for protecting their rights as workers and can voice and safeguard their present and future interests. The trade union is the mechanism for the protection of trade union rights and fundamental rights and the medium through which the workers have an established and powerful voice at the workplace.

With that said, the Union has to be more imaginative and innovative in how it reaches out and creates opportunity for young workers to learn about unions – what they are and what their role is – and to participate in unions. Some of the main challenges being faced by trade unions when they try to organise young workers are: the lack of creative activities that would interest young people, and the failure to market the benefits of being a trade union member. We have to be cognisant that if we fail to continually mobilise the youth into our membership, the risk is that there will be no one to keep the trade union movement alive and no Organization dedicated to fight for the interests of workers.
The traditional response to “engaging young people” in a range of Organizations (not just unions) is to establish specific structures for young members. Whilst I have nothing against these, all too often they simply recreate the traditional ways of working (committees/conferences) that exist elsewhere in the organization. The only real difference is that young people fill the positions usually held by the older persons.

Fortunately, structures for young union members have achieved a lot and as a result they have had a positive impact on the number of young persons who are active within the union. It is often said that unions need to get into schools to promote unions to young people. Even though the efforts spent on educating school children on the history and role of trade unions will not on its own, increase the membership amongst young workers, that effort is still of significant importance.

To be able to preserve the importance and the relevance of the trade union movement, I would recommend the regular staging of workshops for coordinators to assist them in the development of new and existing programmes for young people. These workshops should be held at both local and regional levels so as to allow participants to learn from and build on the experiences and challenges faced by their counterparts. I would also recommend that youth structures should be implemented in all trade union Organizations. In addition, all affiliates of the Caribbean Congress of Labour should be included in the planning and the implementation of activities. The sharing of information will assist the young workers network to build solidarity amongst themselves and across borders, which will strengthen regional solidarity in the long run.
In compiling this article, I inquired from a few of my young Caribbean brothers and sister about their inactivity within their Unions. Responses such as “The Union is outdated and doesn’t do anything for me”, “I am not interested in politics” and “I don’t have the time” have been the more common responses.

In my attempt to conceptualize the importance of mobilizing young workers, I have posed the following questions followed by appropriate responses to emphasize the importance of our Unions organizing young workers.

**Why do we need to recruit young people, who have no interest in serving the Union?**

Since the 1950s and 60s, the trade union movement, within our region, has represented employees from various industries. Throughout the years, our unions have undergone several challenges, which we have been able to overcome, due to our perseverance and determination of protecting the rights of employees and improving working conditions. However, one of our present day challenges is attracting and retaining young workers.

We can agree that a fraction of our unions is made up of young workers, aged 18 to 35 years. It has become the nature of these workers to exclude themselves from actively participating in activities, unless they have a personal grievance.

While we observe, the fading presence of our union stalwarts such as Sir Leroy Trotman in Barbados, Sir Keithlyn Smith from Antigua and Barbuda and George De Peana in Guyana, we must begin to strategically position future leaders in each of our countries to ensure the survival of the trade union movement.

In addition to identifying regional leaders, we must also be cognizant of the retirement of our more mature shop stewards within work places and their sometimes inability to successfully connect with younger workers. This is a potential threat that must be addressed, as it is young workers who are poised as catalysts to develop social and economic policies, which affect not only union members but all workers.

It is imperative that unions commence engagement of all young people who may become potential members. These young people would have to be educated as to the benefits and gains obtained in unionized work places, whilst emphasizing the benefits of unionism. It is these individuals who will bring new ideas and policies to collective bargaining agreements and expand the life of Unions.

**How do we capture the interest of young workers?**

We must be able to identify the areas of interest of young members by visiting their work places, to build a rapport with them and document their education, hobbies and interests. Once acquired, this information can be used to develop social and educational programs for young members. Additionally, it is recommended that at least two young workers function at the executive level of our Unions, to ensure these policies are kept current.

Educational campaigns through the use of seminars and workshops should also be launched. These campaigns must be designed to inform current and potential members of the history and accomplishments of our unions. The next generation of workers, are those students at the secondary and...
tertiary school, they need to be engaged to ensure the survival of the Union. Educational campaigns that mould the minds of these young people will result in the development of future leaders to include shop stewards and officers of the union.

Community building activities are essential to any union’s growth, therefore promoting sports clubs, radio programs, brochures and youth manifestos will establish interest and sort out potential activists.

Young people are avid users of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat, therefore it is an essential tool for unions to use and connect with the younger population. These platforms will assist in building networks between the union and young workers and demonstrate the union’s commitment to modernize its approach and become more relatable to our expanding membership.

**Why should young workers become more involved in their union?**

It is important to know that association with unions provides development opportunities for members. Not only are workers educated about employee rights, but involvement in union activities lends to the development of leadership qualities as well as public speaking and negotiation skills.

Additionally, unions are affiliated to various regional and international organizations such as the International Trade Union Congress (ITUC), Public Service International (PSI), Union Network International (UNI), International Transport Federation (ITF), International Union of Food, Agriculture, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers Associations (IUF), and Caribbean Congress of Labour (CCL). These organizations provide additional overseas training opportunities for members both young and old.

I am living testimony of this, as through my association with the Antigua Barbuda Workers Union, I was able to represent my union at a regional workshop in Barbados a few years ago. Most recently, I was elected a youth representative on the UNI finance committee of the Americas and was able to travel to South Africa, in December 2014.

Although some employees may argue that employers tend to victimize employees because of their union activism, many employees have been promoted to supervisory and managerial positions within companies as a result of the training and development provided through union related activities.

It is important to know that although most of our established unions have historical ties to political parties and similar agendas, they operate independently of each other. It has been the nature of Caribbean political parties to develop from trade unions and as a result members of parliament and even prime ministers have served in titular positions within unions. However, it must be emphasized that political parties focus on the managing of state affairs whilst unions focus on workers’ rights and interests. There have been occasions where both entities have disagreed on social issues and the union led strikes in protest to ensure the wellbeing of members was protected.

**When do we begin mobilizing our young workers?**

The time is now!!!

There is no time like the present to demonstrate to both young and old, that we are committed to the development of the working class and all spheres in society. Regardless of which methods are used by our Unions, there must be a committed approach to the development of programs that will captivate young people.

The implementation of new social and education programs and recruitment drive specifically targeting young workers must be twinned with our unions’ strategic plans. The success of our unions is based on the education of our youth.
From their inception, Caribbean trade unions have been forced to operate on multiple fronts; "labour against capital; the employed versus the jobless; and poor developing countries against rich industrialized nations." This observation by William Demas remains relevant in the 21st century. Caribbean unions must continue to operate on multiple fronts, but in drastically altered circumstances, circumstances that present challenges that are more complex and more subtle than those of the last century.

Political debate, over the last two centuries, has centred around the question of the democratic rights of the individual. That debate would ultimately seep into the world’s workplaces, raising questions of autocracy, the denial of basic human rights and civil rights at the workplace. The continuing debate would evolve into the current search for achieving efficiency, equity, productivity and social justice at the workplace.

The original rights issue at the workplace spawned two different approaches: The European continental assertion that the rights issue was a “social problem” that called into question all of a society’s social systems, and, the Anglo-American view, that confined the debate to relations between employer and the employee or what can be viewed as industrial relations.

Caribbean unions have never recognized those supposed differences and have been willing to fight on both fronts. These are best exemplified by, the critical role that Caribbean unions have played in the Regional Uprising of 1936-38:

• The formation of modern political parties in the region
• The independence struggles of the region
• The push for Caribbean integration
• Formation of the University of the West Indies
• Formation of modern unions
• The right of Caribbean workers to join union of choice
• The right to collective bargaining
• Promotion of health and safety at the workplace
• Establishment social protection systems in the region
• Promotion of modern labour laws in the region

This prompted Barbadian writer, George Lamming, to observe:

"It is organized labour that has really democratized Caribbean society. Until 1935 or 1936, there really wasn’t much difference between the way most people lived in the 1920s and how they lived just after emancipation 100-odd years or so before; and it was the eruption of labour, coming into direct confrontation with the colonial power, that created the new political directorates which we see now."

Lamming’s observations are supported by Demas: “Most political parties in pre-independent Caribbean founded, or were based on, trade unions. If an ideology of West Indian unity existed during colonial times, then this was due largely to the influence of trade unions.”

Trade Unions as Symbols of Social Protest

In essence, Caribbean unions have always questioned the functionality and legitimacy of the social system in the region, whilst pursuing a range of issues at the workplace, designed to promote and protect Caribbean workers.

Currently, in the political sphere internationally, the traditional distinctions are also becoming blurred as attempts to establish correlations between social justice and democracy are being pursued…

That political debate is paralleled with a historic development at the world’s workplaces, where the cost-based/static efficiencies theories posed in the
early 1990’s are being replaced by value added/high road strategies of the 21st century - strategies seeking to establish a correlation between new ways of organizing work/and rewarding performance, lifelong training and education, building employee involvement in decision making and the objectives of productivity, profitability, equity and social justice in labour markets.

...The challenge faced by the region’s unions, therefore, is how best to take advantage of this convergence of all their concerns in order to ensure that social justice exists in and outside the workplace.

Finding the right mix of answers is made even more complex because of the international forces that have been taken into account. The region’s unions are confronted by an international environment that is characterized by globalization - a process of rapid economic integration between nations - described as “the inexorable integration of markets, nation states and technologies to a degree never witnessed before, and in a way that is enabling the world to reach into individuals, corporations and the nation states, further, faster, deeper, cheaper than ever before.”

**Globalization: A Recurring Phenomenon**

Globalization is not a new phenomenon; it has occurred at varying periods, with varying levels of intensity, over the last 100 years. What has accelerated its intensity, are the new technologies of speed, computers, the internet, satellites, fibre optics and digitalization. Gordon Moore, founder of Intel, has argued that the processing power of computer chips will double every 18 months and that the price will at least remain stable, implying that the technologies are increasing their capacity exponentially. Falk and Strauss commented:

*Thanks to trade, foreign direct investment and capital flows, globalization is dispersing political authority throughout the international order. International governance is no longer limited to such traditional fare as defining international borders, protecting diplomats and prescribing the use of force. Many issues of global policy that directly affect citizens are now being shaped by the international system. Workers can lose their jobs as a result of decisions made at the WTO, or within regional trade regimes.*

The geopolitical issues in the world have shifted from the divisions of the Cold War to questions of the integration of markets, cultures and political systems. Small nations have to be cognizant of these developments, because in a supposedly interdependent world, some nations are more equal than some; there is an asymmetry of power in the economic, technological and military spheres. The developed parts of the world have been the major proponents and major beneficiaries of globalization.

As a consequence, small nations and their unions must find the right answers to protect their interests.

**Changes in World Economy and World Trade**

It is not only geopolitical concerns that have dramatically shifted. The world economy is no longer a rational arrangement consisting merely of the exchange of goods and services between nations. It is structural; a basic irreversible change in industry structure, a reorganization in economic activity as exemplified by the spectacular growth in services:

*more and more, cutting-edge commerce in the future will involve the marketing of a vast array of cultural experiences rather than of just traditional industry-based goods and services. Global travel and tourism, theme cities and parks, destination entertainment centers, wellness, fashion, cuisine, professional sports and games, gambling, music, film, television, the virtual world of cyberspace and electronically mediated entertainment of every kind, are fast becoming the center of a new hypercapitalism.*

**The Power of Transnationals**

If the world economy is changing, so is world trade. It is no longer unidimensional trade between nations; it is multidimensional. Increasingly, decisions about factors of production are being made by transnational corporations and the funding of economic activity is by transnational banks that do not fall within the purview of national central banks. Of the world’s largest economies, 49 are transnational corporations. Five hundred transnationals are responsible for one-third of all manufacturing, two-thirds of commodity trade, four-fifths of all trades in technology and management services:

*Businesses are shifting from being multinational to being transnational. The traditional multinational was a national company with foreign subsidiaries. The subsidiaries were clones of the parent company. In a transnational company, there is only one economic unit - the world. Selling, serving, public relations and legal affairs are local, but parts, machinery, planning, research, finance, marketing, pricing and management are conducted in the world. Successful transnational companies see themselves as separate non-national entities for moral, legal and economic rules that are accepted and enforced throughout the global economy. A central challenge, therefore, is the development of international law and supranational organizations that can make and enforce rules for the global economy.*

As transnationals emerge as major players in questions of investment, trade and the world economy, there are increasing initiatives for them to subscribe to minimum ethical, labour and environmental standards.
Caribbean unions have never recognized those supposed differences and have been willing to fight on both fronts. These are best exemplified by, the critical role that Caribbean unions have played in the Regional Uprising of 1936-38:

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- Establishment social protection systems in the region
- Promotion of modern labour laws in the region

...If transnationals have grown in power and influence, the world’s multilaterals have resorted to policies that, for all intents and purposes, are not worker-friendly. The Bretton Woods Institutions have resorted to orthodox economic policies.

...The demand for the liberalization of labour markets was to promote greater flexibility in real and money wage:

These policies were influential because they were simple and universal. They brought necessary macro-economic discipline and a new spirit of competition and creativity to the economy. They opened the way for the application of new technologies and new management practices; but they confused technical means of action, such as privatization and deregulation, with the social and economic ends of development. They became inflexible and did not take the social and political context of markets sufficiently into account. Their impact on people and their families was sometimes devastating.⁹

The World Bank, the WTO and the Power of Sanctions

The World Bank sought to address those concerns when, in 1955, it called for a balance between enterprise competitiveness and the workers' aspirations for higher standards of living. Whatever the opinions of the Bretton Woods twins, they lack the power of sanctions.

It is the WTO - the first multilateral of the globalized world - that has the power of sanctions. The WTO represents a legally-binding commercial treaty, based on a single principle: the obligation of free access to markets.

The WTO represents the tension between a globalizing process, at odds with the nation state and the interests of political constituencies within the nation state, that turn to the democratic political process for attention to their interests. If an international institution, whose decisions are not transparent and open to review, can render decisions at odds with laws passed by national legislatures, then where does sovereignty reside?¹⁰

Given its power of sanctions, there are increasing attempts to expand the concerns of the WTO beyond the sole “precautionary” issue it takes into consideration, the protection of health and safety, to other issues of labour standards and the environment. In a real sense, the WTO is already exerting influence on the world’s workplaces and the environment by its ruling on the “free access” in issues of trade.

These developments have extraordinary implications for the traditional nation states, their economies, trade arrangements and technological developments and for economic theory and the world’s workplaces.

Defending workers’ concern in a globalized world

If it is true, that a globalized world has a low tolerance for systems divergence, then the crucial factor is what systems are put in place, their values and consequence. Caribbean unions, in conjunction with the unions of the world and their allies, must continue to ensure that workers’ concerns are reflected in those systems. From the evidence that work has started, it must be intensified. There are some specific courses of actions that must be undertaken by Caribbean unions:
• Intensify the fight against the imposition of unfettered flexibility of the region's and world's workplaces. Unfettered flexibility is not sustainable. It does not enhance productivity and destroys the social cohesion of a society and in the long run, destroys the trust and mutual commitment needed in the region's workplaces.

• Given the issues of globalization, the need for the Caribbean labour market to adapt to those circumstances and our own regional priorities, we must move beyond a reliance on the World Bank’s objective for labour markets, i.e., efficiency and adopt the following objectives namely:
  • Efficiency - meaning maximum returns to human resources, maximum output and maximum income - corresponding to the economist criterion for judging the allocation function of labour markets
  • Equity - meaning equality of opportunity for all in access to jobs and training, equal pay for work of equal value, a concept which contributes to a more equitable distribution of income
  • Growth - meaning that labour market operations today, should contribute to, not impede, higher productivity, income and improved employment in the future
  • Social justice - meaning that since labour market outcomes may have positive or negative impact on workers' welfare - society should under certain circumstances act to minimize negative outcomes and redress their impacts when they occur.

It is instructive that the OECD has always relied on efficiency and equity as the objectives of its labour markets.

Beyond the fight against unfettered flexibility and the adoption of the ILO objectives for the region's labour markets, Caribbean unions must promote a value-added response to the challenges posed by globalization. Regionalization adds the need for the region's workplaces to be competitive.

In a broad sense, we need to:
  • Encourage collaborative institutions and collaborative societies
  • Stress teamwork - education/training/productivity/quality
  • Reconfigure institutions in the labour market
  • Pursue new industrial relations models
  • Stress co-operation between labour and management through framework agreements/memorandum of understandings. The goal is to pursue strategies, designed to achieve fundamental transformation in employment relations — transformation intended to achieve outcomes of mutual benefit to enterprises and their employees.

Finally, in the past, Caribbean unions, because of their close relationship with traditional political parties, had relied on those relationships to protect the social justice gains that the region has made over the decades.

Given the complexities of the extra-regional forces that have been identified, Caribbean unions must join in the fight by civil organizations worldwide, to ensure that citizens have access to the Internet or the promotion of the concept of “citizens’ communication rights” because in the final analysis, unions must ensure that the region’s citizens can circumvent what Hoffman calls: “the filter of established media, thereby ensuring the democratization of the public sphere.” This is critical as media in the Caribbean is either owned by the state or status quo interests. In the final analysis, an informed people are the best defence of their own social rights.

NOTES
1. This is an edited version of an article written in 2006. The full version may be consulted in Goolsarran, S.J. (ed.), Industrial Relations in the Caribbean: Issues and Perspectives, International Labour Office, 2006.
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Has been a longstanding staff member of the National Union of Public Workers in Barbados and a senior Caribbean trade unionist having served as that union’s Assistant General Secretary (1973-1977) and General Secretary (1977-2007). Goddard served also as General Secretary of the Caribbean Public Services Association (CPSA) (1982-1997) and has been a Trustee of the Caribbean Congress of Labour (CCL) since 1983.

SANDRA MASSIAH
Is the Subregional Secretary in the Caribbean for Public Services International (PSI); global union federation representing over 20 million women and men who deliver valuable public services throughout the world. PSI’s head office is on the Franco-Swiss border, 5 minutes away from Geneva. The Caribbean office is based in Barbados. She started a trade union career as an activist and executive member of the National Union of Public Workers (NUPW) in Barbados. After working in the public service in Barbados, Sandra worked as Caribbean Project Co-ordinator for the Commonwealth Trade Union Council (CTUC), based in London, UK. Ms Massiah is a Barbadian, but is perhaps better described as a Caribbean person – a Caribbean trade unionist. She is an economist and is also trained in Journalism, Marketing and Communications.
**JILLIAN JOY BARTLETT-ALLEYNE**

is the General Secretary of the National Union of Government and Federated Workers (NUGFW), she has been seconded from the Ministry of Agriculture to the NUGFW for the past sixteen years and has been a member of the NUGFW for over twenty-five years. Mrs Bartlett-Alleyne has served as Labour Relations Officer, Senior Labour Relations Officer and Negotiator II with the NUGFW. She has also served as a Treasurer on the National Executive. Ms Bartlett is a representative on the Board of the Water and Sewerage Authority as a Commissioner. She holds the positions of Central Executive member of National Trade Union Centre, Caribbean Public Services Association and Women’s Titular for Public Services International. As President of the NUGFW Women’s Executive Council, she has rallied women together from the various Sections and Divisions of the union and empowered them to become strong activists.

**LLOYD GOODLEIGH**

(1939-2015) was a past President of the Caribbean Congress of Labour. In his trade union career, he held the positions of President and General Secretary of the Jamaica Confederation of Trade Unions. For the better part of two decades, he served as the worker delegate for Jamaica at the International Labour Conference as well as the General Secretary of the National Workers’ Union. He also brought his knowledge and experience to support and enhance the work of the Industrial Disputes Tribunal in Jamaica.

**FERNANDO E. M. SAMUEL**

Is employed as an Industrial Relations Officer at the Antigua and Barbuda Workers’ Union (ABWU). Prior to this, he worked at the ABI Bank Ltd for fourteen (14) years, where he served in several capacities including the position of supervisor. Mr Samuel holds a Higher National Diploma (HND) in Banking and Finance from the University of Wales and a Diploma in Banking and Finance from the University of the West Indies. For the past four years, Mr Samuel has been an active executive member of the ABWU and currently serves as the Union’s treasurer and youth coordinator.

**SERENA BROWNE**

Has been employed with the Barbados Workers’ Union since 2003 as Clerical Officer and the Youth Coordinator. As the Youth Coordinator, she is responsible for the Youth Arm of the Barbados Workers’ Union which is comprised of sixteen (16) Executive Members. Browne is also a Vice President for the International Transport Federation Youth Committee as well as the representative responsible for the Caribbean. She is a member of the Safety & Health Committee, the Special Events Committee as well as the May Day Planning Committee of the Barbados Workers’ Union. She is committed to her work as a young trade unionist and takes her role as Youth Coordinator very seriously. Browne believes young workers have a significant role to play and can make a positive impact in their workplaces and by extension the world.