Challenges to the Trade Union Movement

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The Contribution of Women in the Development of the Caribbean Labour Movement
European Union

International Labour Organization
CARIBBEAN CONGRESS OF LABOUR

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The people of this region, particularly the working class, have had to grapple with the effects of unprecedented levels of economic challenges since the 2008 financial crisis and subsequent economic crisis. Sadly, almost a decade of development has been lost. The region has not taken participatory democracy seriously; governance structures are underutilized, flawed or neglected as evidenced by the dysfunction of tripartite institutions and the lack of consistent and effective social dialogue processes in many countries. The challenges confronted by the region are likely to be exacerbated when the effects of Brexit and the policy changes occasioned by a new United States Administration, and other global changes, are fully felt.

As the Caribbean Congress of Labour, with the assistance of the European Union, publishes this second issue of CCL Today, which focuses on the gender dimensions of labour, challenges facing the movement and sustainability, it is intended to inspire a renewed drive toward solidarity, advocacy, and justice, as well as to stimulate greater calls for engagement with the labour movement.

Work is ongoing. The Executive and General Council will lay out a plan of action over the coming year and this will demand the consistency, participation, determination, and perseverance to accomplish the goals that we have set ourselves under the EU-funded Project as well as under our Strategic Plan 2016-2019. Much has to be accomplished. The contribution and support of each and every affiliate is critical to the success of the CCL and the regional labour movement. As the old adage goes “one hand can’t clap”.

With each affiliate taking advantage of opportunities of training being offered and giving back to the strengthening of the CCL’s structures and programmes, we can look forward to the regional movement moving forward, moving upward, moving stronger together, so that the CCL will meet and even exceed its stated objectives. Of this I am confident.

Sincere thanks to our members and to our friends who have taken the time and given of their intellectual contributions to make this publication possible.

We look forward to receiving your comments and updates.

“CCL Today is intended to inspire a renewed drive toward solidarity, advocacy, and justice ...”

Gillian Alleyne
General Secretary
The Caribbean Congress of Labour is pleased to see the publication of the second issue of *CCL Today*. This issue focuses on challenges to the trade union movement with a focus on women in leadership.

Trade unions in the Caribbean have felt the full brunt of the 2008 financial and economic crisis of international capital. There has been an unprecedented loss of jobs; strains and cuts in social expenditure; decrease in household incomes; sustained high unemployment, particularly amongst the youth; the worrying rise in violent criminal activity and the growing sense of hopelessness amongst our working people.

In the face of these challenges, the organised voice of labour in the region, the CCL, continues to rise up to the defence of workers, promoting social equity and championing the cause of labour. These intricacies call for harmonising the militant defence of workers and their rights while trying to protect jobs. This is compounded by attempts of some employers to use the crisis to maximise profits through increasing workloads, leading to more and more workers becoming burnt-out. Workers must be prepared to unite with a common purpose and goal as we embark on breaking new ground. In the attainment of our rightful place in our various territories, we must focus on workers’ constitutional, statutory and contractual rights, our freedom to associate and join a union of our choice, our right to collective bargain, our right to a decent pension, and health services, our right to make a decent wage that keeps pace with the cost of living and inflation, our right to stop being afraid, to stand up, speak up and demonstrate in the face of adversity if we need to, our right to protect our children, the elderly, others, and our homes, our right to feel safe and work in a safe and healthy environment, our right to be productive citizens of the Caribbean.

The CCL as the official voice of labour in the Caribbean will continue to represent all workers and their organizations across the length and breadth of the Caribbean. We will continue to work along with the governments of the region and CARICOM to ensure that the Caribbean grows from strength to strength.

We wish to thank all who have made contributions to this publication and encourage others to start writing for the upcoming publication. We thank the European Union (EU) for the financial support under the CCL/CEC component of the Support to Facilitate Participation of CARIFORUM Civil Society in Regional Development and the Integration Process. Without the untiring support of Sister Paula Robinson, Senior Specialist, Workers’ Activities at the International Labour Organization and Brother Chris Harper, National Project Officer, this publication would not be possible. Most of all I would like to recognize and thank the newly elected Executive team who have been challenged to ensure that the CCL/CEC EU-Funded Project is a success and to move the CCL to greater heights.

As we remember:

“Labor Unions are the leading force for democratization and progress.” - Noam Chomsky
Rhoda Reddock

The Contribution of Women in the Development of the Caribbean Labour Movement

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Rhoda Reddock is Professor of Gender, Social Change and Development and Deputy Principal of The University of the West Indies (UWI), St. Augustine Campus Trinidad & Tobago.

Her multi-disciplinary research interests include gender and feminism, women's social and labour history; social movements; environment, development, masculinities, culture, ethnicity and identity and sexualities. Prof. Reddock has numerous publications including eight books (two award-winning), three monographs, editing four special journal issues, and over 60 peer-reviewed articles and book chapters.


Kenny James

Benefits of National Federations: The experiences of the Grenada Trades Union Council (GTUC) Page 7

Anthony Kenny James is the President of the Grenada Trades' Union Council (GTUC) and immediate past President (2009-2013) of the Grenada Union of Teachers (GUT). He is also the Vice Principal at the St. Rose Modern Secondary School where he instructs in Caribbean History and Social Studies.

In 1995, Mr. James joined the teaching profession and the trade union movement and in 1996, was recognized as the most outstanding young secondary school teacher by the St. John's Branch GUT where he served as President for three terms, before becoming the second Vice President.

Mr. James held the Chairmanship of the Education and Research Committee of GUT, through which he was able to publish the revised Constitution of the GUT and the Member's Kit. Considered a regional specialist, Mr. James was also trained by Education International (EI) and the Caribbean Union of Teachers (CUT) in Educational Policy Development and Assessment. Mr. James continues to represent the GUT and GTUC on a number of Boards and Committees including the National Insurance Board, the Grenada National Accreditation Board (GNAB), and is one of Grenada's representatives on the General Council of the Caribbean Congress of Labour.

A trained secondary school teacher, Mr. James holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Liberal Studies and International Politics (Hons.) from the St. George's University and a Master of Science Degree in Education with specialization in Teacher Leadership from Walden University.
Derek Alleyne
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Derek McDonald Alleyne’s career has stretched from working in the Public Service as a Labor Officer, Community Development Officer and now as Director of the Urban Development Commission (UDC). He has also worked in the Insurance and Tourism industries, in sales of Solar Water Systems, and was Production Manager at two offshore telecommunications industries.

Before joining the UDC in 2009, Derek was the Deputy General Secretary of the National Union of Public Workers. He also teaches part-time at the Barbados Institute of ment and Productivity (BIMAP) in the Principles of Industrial Relations and Administrative and Labor Law.

A graduate of the Cave Hill Campus of the University of the West Indies (UWI), he completed his Masters with Leicester University and is now pursuing a Philosophy PhD at Walden University in the United States, where he is currently writing his thesis focusing on the sport of cricket.

An active politician, Derek has contested in two elections and served the ruling party in the Senate from 2008-2009. He is also a member of the General Council of the Democratic Labour Party (DLP). He is an avid sports enthusiast and enjoys most sports, particularly volleyball, cricket and football.

Jillian Joy Bartlett-Alleyne
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Sister Bartlett-Alleyne is the General Secretary of the National Union of Government and Federated Workers (NUGFW).

Seconded to the NUGFW from the Ministry of Agriculture for the past 16 years and a member of the NUGFW for over 25 years, Mrs. Bartlett-Alleyne has has also served as a Labour and Senior Labour Relations Officer, as well as a Negotiator II and a Treasurer on the National Executive. She holds positions as a Central Executive member of National Trade Union Centre, Caribbean Public Services Association and Women's Titular for Public Services International.

Sister Bartlett is additionally the President of the NUGFW Women's Executive Council. She has spearheaded many advocacy campaigns including ‘The Elimination of Violence against Women/Girls and Gender-Based Violence’ giving a voice to the children of Trinidad & Tobago. She also brought about the first ever concert to be hosted by a Trade Union, ‘In solidarity and Praise’, in Trinidad & Tobago.

Sister Bartlett holds an Associate Degree in Labour Studies from Cipriani College of Labour and Corporative Study, a B.Sc. Major in Public Sector Management and Minor in International Relations from the University of the West Indies (UWI), and a Master of Science in Government from UWI St. Augustine Campus.
Ayanna T. Samuels  
**Gender Relations in the Workplace Both Employer and Union**  
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Ayanna Samuels is an international development professional specializing in Gender and the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and Technology Policy as fulcrum for socio-economic development and poverty eradication.

Ayanna's consulting practice specializes in ICT Policy, the use of ICTs for socio-economic development, and Gender and ICTs/Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) policy. Her clients include the World Bank, Caribbean Development Bank, International Development Bank, Caribbean Association of National Telecommunications Organisations (CANTO), CARICOM, the Caribbean Telecommunications Union, the Latin America and Caribbean Network Information Centre (LACNIC), the International Telecommunications Union, the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organization, and the International Institute for Communications and Development. Ms. Samuels has also served on the Government of Jamaica's (GoJ's) National ICT Advisory Council and the Board of Directors of GoJ's Public Sector Transformation Committee.

She is currently the Jamaican-based World Bank Consultant for the regional Caribbean Mobile Innovation Project and the Jamaica Business Development Lead for an innovative start-up called mSurvey. Ayanna holds two M.Sc. degrees in Technology Policy and Aerospace Engineering, and a B.Sc. in Aerospace Engineering with Information Technology; all from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

**Burton Sankeralli**  
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Burton Sankeralli is a Trinidadian philosopher dissident who has written widely about politics and culture. He has written a number of books including Obeah and Modernity and The Rag File.

He was deeply involved in the anti-smelter movement and was a close associate of the late champion of small farmers' interests, Norris Deonarine. He is also a vocalist in both the calypso and parang genres.
Trade Unions and Succession Planning

- by Derek Alleyne
It was a mere coincidence that I took from the shelves of my small library a copy of James Ferguson’s Makers of the Caribbean. The author’s story of Caribbean resilience, creativity amidst a culture and climate of struggle pointed me to the direction this essay on trade union and change should take. The direction became straightforward when it connected to the accepted view, of all who have an interest in trade unions, that the movement is undergoing change in personnel, in structure, in interests and in the practices adopted in pursuit of its interests. Trade unions and their role and importance to Barbados have become topical and a popular topic that has been engaging the attention of people around the trade union movement is the question of leadership.

Discussions about leadership may have been influenced by the loss, either through retirement or death, of 1980s stalwarts like DePeana, Morris, Goddard, Greaves, Bowen, Clarke, Alert, Goodleigh, Trotman, James and Charles, in a relatively short period. Some have suggested that the departure of these stalwarts has led to a leadership crisis in the movement. How real is this claim and how has the movement responded? This paper looks at succession planning within trade unions in Barbados and argues that while young people may have been appointed or elected to senior roles, unions in Barbados may have ignored the importance of creating an environment designed to sustain the growth and development of the leadership potential of their members.

Most leadership theorists agree that organizational culture is a critical determinant of the nature of leadership and the understanding of change. Burke (2011) explains that organizational culture is system wide and if change is to be effective, it must be revolutionary rather than gradual. It requires understanding what Schein (2004) has labelled -artifacts, espoused beliefs and values that influence decision-making within the organization. The situation in Barbados reflects a trade union movement in transition from a leadership that in this writer’s view failed to create a climate that would have conduced to transformational change and pave the way for, not only new leaders to emerge but more important for, a new leadership style and culture to take form.

Defenders of the realm may argue that the new leaders need time to stamp their style on the industrial relations environment. I argue that in Barbados this understanding of leadership specifically and management generally continues to retard efforts to build new models of leadership. It is not about style but more about the assumptions people make about what is important to the organization. Too many organizations are caught in the old leadership paradigms of charismatic and transactional leadership styles and processes and are failing to recognize that the organizations have now become global entities and new leadership models must be developed that transcend the local cultural norms and values. The heavy-roller style and all roads lead to the personage that sits in the Executive seat are things of the past. Decision-making by unions, like any other national organization, is not only locally determined but involve a recognition that influences flow from regional and international interests and often those influences from outside the local environment often have greater influence than the local interests. The internal organizational environment must share common beliefs and be prepared to respond to the impact or likely impact from the external environment. Can the structure of trade unions respond effectively to the new reality?
Recently the National Union of Public Workers (NUPW) and the Barbados Workers Union (BWU) appointed their first female General Secretary. In the case of the NUPW the choice was for a career unionist with over thirty years. This appointment on paper appears to have continued the tradition of selection from within. At the BWU, although the new General Secretary does not enjoy her counterpart’s long service, she has been groomed from within the belly of the oldest workers’ union in Barbados for leadership. In addition to the first female General Secretary, the NUPW is now served by an Executive Council with an average age in the low 30s even though the Council averages 50+. One would think that with these appointments the trade union movement in Barbados had been placed on a strong base to tackle what is becoming a challenging industrial relations climate. However recent evidence, especially in the NUPW’s industrial relations efforts, does not suggest that the base and structure of the unions are adequately equipped. How has the mix of an aged Secretariat and new and young Executive affected the decision-making processes?

The uncertainty within the leadership is reflected, in that at every stage veteran retired trade unionist Sir Leroy Trotman has remained a force around the BWU’s negotiations, giving the impression that the new leadership needs a handholding mentor. How has the influence of the heavy-roller style impacted on the new leadership? The same can be said of the presence of Brother Frost at the negotiations involving teachers’ unions. Leadership and transitioning to a new paradigm have not been properly planned nor executed. In both senior unions the evidence confirms the view that reactionary rather than revolutionary change has been the dominant force. Someone has to tell the unions as Gothard & Austin (2013) have argued that in a period of intense change what is required is reflection on what might have been, disengagement in activities that satisfy relationships and coming to terms with one’s accomplishments and disappointments.

Most definitions of a trade union invoke the concept of combination and speak to workers and employers. Modern trade unions, although deemed to be non-profit in their financial dealings, operate to ensure that the entity is kept in the black. Whatever the size or structure, key to all unions is the membership. It brings not only dues but skills and loyalty that are critical to the success and development of any union. How those skills are deployed and encouraged within the structure of the union will impact the extent of the loyalty and commitment that members bring to their participation.

In an earlier edition of CCL Today, speaking specifically about public sector unions, Sandra Massiah, recognizing that unions were under pressure, argued that members are not as active as they used to be and suggested that a succession plan was needed if the movement was to remain the force it has been through the years. The international unionist is no doubt aware that across the Caribbean union density has been falling and as the World Labour Report 1997-98 informed, internationally union density had fallen to less than 20 per cent of workers in 48 out of 92 countries surveyed (World Labour Report 1997-98). The decline in union density has created challenges beyond a decline in revenue. Critical to the decline in union growth has been the loss of new leaders and hence the concerns expressed by trade unionists. It seems that Barbadian unions have not come to grips with the reality that the environment that led to the growth and development of unions and the spawning of outstanding leaders has changed.
No one can deny that the trade union movement as a force for change was in the vanguard of the rapid development of the Caribbean region and the emergence of a middle class. Caribbean trade unions borrowed their structures from the British models and the legislation, that gives them legitimacy following the upheavals of the 1930s, reflects that relationship. Morris (2016) has argued that the labor movement that followed the 1930s embraced the many strands of socialism and provided a climate for the emerging amalgam of anglicized leaders and those schooled in the culture of hard knocks at the local level. This group and the environment of change combined or collided and in the process carved out a political and social movement for the laboring class. In Barbados the collision led to a union-political party nexus. In the first instance it was between the Barbados Workers Union (BWU) and the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) and later with the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) ushering the post 1960s social, political and economic changes. The point being made here is that political and labour issues were similar if not the same and the leadership reflected strong individuals with a philosophy grounded in Fabian socialism and with a drive to change the status quo.

This relationship seems to be changing even though within the NUPW much talk has been directed at the political membership or lack of it. There is a difference between political unionism and using the union to advance ones political ambition. Without the evidence no case can be made for the current leadership’s political unionism qualities. This is in stark contrast to the earlier leaders who vaunted their political affiliation with pride because the interests were one and the same. From all indications the environment that spawned Grantley Adams, Uriah Butler, Bustamante, Frank Walcott, Arturo Cipriani, Hubert Crichlow, Bain Alves and the score of public sector unionists has changed. The leadership characteristic that has emerged seems to reflect a professional group of managers with little or no interests in trade unionism. If we accept this reality (and I doubt it can be denied) then it requires a shift in the leadership structure of unions. More critical is the need for unions, like all other organizations, to spend resources on creating the environment for leaders to emerge with the skills, commitment and ideological underpinnings critical to today’s environment.

In March 2016, the Caribbean Congress of Labour (CCL) held a strategic planning meeting and, while the report that will outline the decisions of the meeting will not be ready until March 2017, it is clear that at the regional level labour recognizes the importance of planning strategically. The statement from the meeting points to a focus on the Congress staying relevant, the need for organizational and knowledge management and the sustainability of the Congress as a regional body. While we await the details of these themes, CCL’s Annual Conference did endorse the strategic plans. The other major regional body the Caribbean Public Service Association (CPSA) held its Annual Conference in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and although Prime Minister Gonzales in his feature did raise the issues of relevance and change, no specific focus on restructuring or strategic planning was forthcoming from the conference. Notwithstanding the focus at the regional level, the major challenge to organized labour’s sustainability lies at the individual union level, if for no other reason than the fact that leadership at the regional level is driven from the leadership at the individual union level. There is evidence of strategic planning within the individual unions but what the exercises undertaken have shown is that the emphasis has been primarily on financial viability. As a consequence it has been business as usual and hence the pessimistic responses to unionism in the region.

Kimball (2005) defines succession planning as a dynamic ongoing process of systematically...
identifying, assessing and developing leadership and management talent; and assessing, developing and recognizing key contributors to meet the future organizational strategic and operational needs'. From this definition, one immediately recognizes that the organization must have some strategic plan that sets out a path for growth and development with timelines and financial streams. It is not clear how many trade unions in the region have engaged in strategic planning, but the evidence continues to support the claim that the movement is in crisis. Yet there seems to be a 'wait-and-see' policy with the hope that some miracle will be bestowed on the movement and it will begin to build capacity, create new structures and increase participation.

For succession planning to have any long term benefit to an organization it must be driven by an appreciation, not only of what is now available and what is challenging the organization but, of a clear understanding of what forces are likely to influence the organization in the future. Too often young people are brought into an organization on the claim that these young people are the future leaders of tomorrow. They are brought, often on the basis of the academic and technical knowledge relating to the particular discipline. But often the environment in which they are asked to operate is itself a barrier to the expected change process.

Unions, like all organizations, come in many forms and even more structures. Some are short-lived and some have endured through time. Some limit membership to a specific discipline while others are general. What is common is that they all provide some service that attracts members. People join organizations because some value, good or service that the organization possesses, attracts the individual. They also join because people with whom they have some common characteristics or interests are also affiliated. But since organizations are in continuous change, the specific factors or interests that keep people tied must also be adjusted to meet the new reality. Change in union personnel, whether at the level of the elected officers or at the paid secretariat level, cannot lead to the systemic change now necessary to respond to the global business culture. Strategic planning is vital but the nature of the exercise and the focus of the examination is even more critical to any long-term and sustainable plans. Change in the way unions have conducted their business is being forced on unions and unions in Barbados can make cosmetic changes and continue to mark time or they can engage in transformational change.

Sandra Massiah has raised the concern that union membership appears less willing to engage. I share that concern and believe that recruitment; selection, replacement and displacement within unions must all be informed by practices, skills and a philosophy driven by a willingness to participate. In a world where individualism seems to be the dominant creed, the task appears formidable but borrowing from old structures is a first step. As such, the shop steward councils, and in the case of the NUPW, the Divisions must take priority in the change process. Simply holding on to structures and processes from the past can only retard the unions. Memories of the past, the reality of the present, and the uncertainty of the future are all ingredients in succession planning. Are the vision, mission and values of unions the same now as they were in 1950? I doubt, but examining the new reality and visioning the future are begging for union attention.

It is up to the movement to reform itself otherwise the pessimistic utterances about relevance of trade unions will continue to grow until even the leadership of the movement believes them to be true. Individual unions, as a matter of urgency, must undertake internal assessments, clarify their direction and align their strategies with their goals. These measures should provide a better understanding of the needs and the strategies to meet them, and if embodied in a plan, will also inform the approach to leadership development and succession planning and management (Gothard & Austin, 2013). Leadership succession in trade unions has always led to responses of emotion, fear, stress, conflict and creates considerable disquiet among the leadership. Unions are old and strong enough and should be able to manage the emotional responses because failure to engage in strategic planning around the issue of leadership will create more challenges in both the short and the long terms.
References


Benefits of National Federations: The experiences of the GTUC

- by Kenny James
Introduction

Trade unionism in the post emancipation period has been a part of the social, political and economic facets of the Grenadian society; leading the charge in effecting social change while advancing the cause of the working people of the society.

The movement dates back to as early as June 20, 1913 with the establishment of the Grenada Union of Teacher (GUT) with its first president being Franklyn M. Sylvester. Subsequently, other unions such as the Grenada Association were formed in 1920 under the leadership of T.A. Marryshow who later became known as the “Father of Federation”. The Association became known for its slogan “jobs for the jobless”. The Grenada Association was later renamed the Grenada Workers Association and formed branches in the various parishes. Later, in 1933 a Bill was passed giving recognition to Trade Unions and this precipitated the split of the Grenada Workers Association into two new unions, the General Workers Union and Grenada Workers’ Union.

The flood gates were now opened. As a result, other unions emerged, such as the Grenada Manual Mental and Intellectual Workers Union (GMMIWU). The Grenada Trades Union Council (GTUC) was then established on 13 March, 1955 by the merging of the General Workers Union and the Grenada Workers’ Union.

Today the GTUC has seven affiliate unions; the Public Workers Union (PWU), the Grenada Union of Teachers (GUT), Bank and General Workers Union (BGWU), Seamen and Waterfront Workers Union (SWWU), Commercial and Industrial Workers Union (CIWU), the Grenada Technical and Allied Workers Union (GTAWU) and the Grenada Manual, Mental and Intellectual Workers Union (GMMIWU).

Benefits of the Federation/ Council

The Grenada Trades Union Council (GTUC) has evolved to be a trade union organisation representing Unions as the National Centre and non-unionized workers in Grenada thus making it the vanguard of the tripartite labour arrangement, and the main proponent of social dialogue in Grenada. In this regard, both government and Civil Society organisations will interface with the GTUC as the National Centre on matters of national importance rather than interfacing with the seven affiliates individually. This approach saves time and gives affiliates a united voice on the matter in question. Non-unionized workers in particular utilize the service of the GTUC in seeking advice on industrial matters before going to the Ministry of Labour or other agencies. Furthermore, nearly all established organization in Grenada in recognition of the importance of the Centre has a labour representative from the GTUC as a member of its board representing workers interest. From the National Insurance Board, Grenada National Accreditation Board, Grenada Port Authority, the Grenada Food and Nutrition Council to list a few. In addition, there is the Monitoring Committee of the Structural Adjustment Programme.

At the top of the list is the National Insurance Scheme (NIS) where the composition of the Board is a model of what Boards should be with equal representation for government, representation for government, the employers and labour. In this dynamic, labour has a vote in ensuring that the national insurance benefits for the people are safeguarded. Consequently, in the recent
The home-grown Structural Adjustment Programme implemented by the government, the labour movement at its Congress in 2015, passed a resolution denying the government a ‘haircut’ on the monies owed to the scheme. Instead GTUC advocated and lobbied for restructuring of the debt which was accepted and was of greater satisfaction to the workers than a ‘haircut’.

Moreover, the GTUC is represented on the Committee of Social Partners which meets monthly to assess the progress of the country and to make recommendations to the Prime Minister on the way forward. Here, some matters of importance to the labour movement can be raised and addressed before it gets to crisis proportions. The reality is that the opinion of labour is valued and respected as labour represents a significant number of persons in the society and thus, the voice of labour has the ability to tilt the scales on important issues.

Also, it is worthy of notice that, through the GTUC, labour since the late 1980s has had representation in the Upper House of the Grenada Parliament. The representatives were C. Eric Pierre; Senator the Honourable Chester Humphrey, who is now President of the Senate; and the current representative, Senator Raymond Roberts, Assistant General Secretary of the GTUC. This seat in Parliament offers labour the opportunity to advocate for and lobby at the highest level on issues affecting the working people of Grenada. Through this medium the labour movement’s position on issues such as the national reconstruction levy, the IMF Structural Adjustment Programme, amendments to the labour code, and labour’s response to budget proposals amongst others are addressed.

The GTUC provides recommendations annually to the Government of Grenada for inclusion in its budget. Notwithstanding, while all recommendations do not find their way in the actual budget, there continues to be noticeable additions as a result of the constant agitation of the GTUC as the National Centre. In addition, the Council plays a significant role in the shaping of legislation such as the maternity law under the People’s Revolutionary Government (PRG) which saw women being able to obtain paid maternity leave from their employers. Similarly, recently the government passed the new Labour Code which contains the Labour Relations Act and the Employment Act. This was and continues to be the efforts of the Grenada Trade Union Council and the Grenada Employers Federation through the Labour Advisory Board to ensure that what gets into that document is reflective of what they have agreed to as being in the best interest of both the worker and employer to create a harmonized labour relations climate in Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

One must be ever mindful that in an evolving Caribbean, the positions of organized labour cannot and should not be underestimated. In Grenada and other parts of the region, workers cannot lose sight of the fact that our history will prove that the labour movement was the pioneer of workers freedom, political and economic independence, and the evolution of a black Caribbean identity which cannot be erased. As Samuel Gompers stated “where trade unions are most firmly organized, there are the rights of the people most respected.”

**Conclusion**

In Grenada, labour is definitely alive and on a positive trajectory with the emergence of a new generation of youthful labour leader namely, Lydon Lewis (GUT), Andre Lewis (GTAWU), Adrian Francis and Racheal Robert (PWU) and Kenny James (GTUC). Undoubtedly, the foundation set by the likes of George Otway, Sir Eric Mathew Gairy, F.M Sylvester, C. Eric Pierre, Anslym Debourg, Derick Allard, Madonna Harford, Claris Charles, and Chester Humphrey to list a few will be built upon by the trade unionist of today.

As is said in the true spirit of Grenadian Trade Unionism, “Forward ever, backward never.” Long live the labour movement, long live the GTUC, long live all unionists who continue to advocate on behalf of working people of Grenada and the region.

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NB - 1. Haircut was the term used to describe a reduction in the amount owed to the NIS.
Approaches to Problem Solving and Effective Intervention at the Workplace - A Trade Union Perspective

- by Jillian Joy Bartlett-Alleyne
We live in a modern world where life is dominated by work, the fact that most people spend more time at work than any place else is an inescapable truth. The workplace therefore has to be transformed from a remote place where people...traverse to earn income to an environment which enables levels of satisfaction, enjoyment, rewards, developmental growth and self-actualization. While there are some employers who endeavour to inculcate equity and fairness in the workplace environment there are those who do not do all they can to ensure that the work environment is enabling. Trade unions are themselves employers and therefore should be vitally instrumental in ensuring that the workplace becomes a better place, more conducive for a high level of productivity, which, in essence, can only deliver huge benefits to both the employer and the worker, a double blessing of sorts.

Through Trade unions, workers speak collectively participating in decision-making on workplace issues. Only in the utopian state lie no conflicting issues, in real life we always strive towards a perfect workplace scenario, where there are no issues or problems, bearing in mind that workplaces are made up of people with different personalities, values, goals and ambitions. Because of this the workplace is filled with unavoidable interpersonal conflicts and as a result perfection is not a reality.

However, through well thought-out and executed measures to solve workplace problems, it is possible to create a workplace environment that would facilitate productivity and enhance the performance of workers and allow them to attain job satisfaction. After all, it is job satisfaction that keeps workers motivated, well-motivated workers positively impact the total quality of any organization.

It was Chris Humphries, Deputy Director at City and Guilds who said,

“Nowadays true job satisfaction and happiness is about fulfilling your full potential, tapping into your own creativity and feeling that you can make a difference.” He also stated, “A lot of employees are starting to realize that job satisfaction is more important than any other consideration, including money. You spend such a lot of time at work, it's vital to enjoy what you do.”

Even with the general understanding that problem-solving is paramount to the creation of an operative workplace, many problems and issues exist that require proficient intervention; it is not simply a question of who is right or who is wrong but calls for wise intervention and simply not “throwing the baby out with the bath water”. While it serves the best interest of the employers and the organization that these issues be adequately addressed, employers often tend to operate under...
a predisposition that is geared towards the ‘bottom line’ (profit-maximization) or ‘not having time to waste on those issues’ and thus, may not always exercise the best judgment in executing the proper approach to problem-solving.

It is often difficult to solve problems at the workplace including in the trade union itself without having to deal with some form of adversity along the way. Problem-solvers often find themselves time-strapped so they take short-cuts in order to alleviate one issue to move on to the next of the many and varied problems that inundate work sites, often creating new problems. In a modern and globalized world of work, unions have moved beyond being institutions that place pressure on employers to improve workplace conditions, to being mediators that seek to help organizations establish a healthy workplace environment that would enhance productivity and also to establish healthy employer/worker relationships. It is quite difficult at times for employers to effectively deal with problems at the workplace without the input from the trade union.

As architects of the well-being of workers, trade unions have the responsibility of minimizing the occurrence and reoccurrence of problems at the workplace and this demand unions having the foresight to tackle them head-on before circumstances escalate through: Non-Crisis Committee meetings, legislating means to prevent and solve work place issues by means of collective agreements and through articulated grievance procedures and finally arbitration. Unions therefore, must have 360 degree vision enabling them to see around, beneath and beyond the problem itself and to see well-beyond the obvious.

Transparent Communication

Communication is a two-way process involving feedback therefore effective communication is a fundamental necessity in problem-solving. In order to get to the root of any problem in a timely and efficient manner, concerns of all involved must be freely expressed. The trade union, as part of the process leading to solutions, must be capable of generating an environment of trust that would facilitate open and frank dialogue which, in turn, would map out a path toward a viable and sustainable solution.

Addressing the Silo Mentality

Theoretically as transparent communicators internally and externally trade unions are required to break down the “silo mentality” prohibiting the formation of different “Camps” within the organization, which affects cohesiveness within the organization, thereby fuelling isolation of systems, processes and departments within the organization. One fundamental approach to problem-solving is to enable a boundary-less organization with a culture that is focused on the betterment of a healthier whole. This eliminates hidden agendas and fosters cross-functional collaboration. The breaking down of silos enables workers to get involved in problem-solving together, thus shifting the direction from corporate politicking to strengthening the organization. The silo mentality is one of the root causes for most workplace problems and the trade union which represents the members throughout the various departments would have the strongest footing for rallying cross-collaboration.

Open-minded Mediators

In order to facilitate transparent communication and break down silos, people have to be open-minded. When discernment only follows a myopic path, effective problem-solving is hindered and trade unions have to be cautious to ensure that there is no harbouring of unnecessary hidden agendas that serve to prevent the exposure of the inefficiencies or shortcomings of any of the parties involved. Open-mindedness broadens vision and strengthens foresight.
The Solid Foundational Strategy

Dissecting a problem does not necessarily bring change; sometimes the stark reality of the root cause is the beginning of another problem - of how to deal with the revealed truth. Rather, it is the identification of the strategy for change that lies within problem-solving that would not only bring about a solution, but a possible evolution for the organization. Trade unions have the ability to draw from their deep pool of resources (connections to people, knowledge and past experiences) to solve current issues that arise at the workplace. But in unions themselves how do we solve the problem when it lies at the top. There is no such thing in problem-solving as a ‘no brainer’. Guesswork in problem-solving is suicidal. Problems have to be critically assessed and this includes the careful deliberation of every possible opportunity that arises from each problem and each outcome. There must therefore be an ardent approach to getting to the root of the problem and recognition that each problem has its own nuances that may require a distinct strategy towards a viable resolution and at times the implementation of the solution may not lie at the top but may be derived elsewhere.

As problem-solvers, trade unions contribute to the success of organizations and for any organization, with success comes change, i.e. the problem may not be the problem as presented but may be how we view the problem. Sometimes change may mean changing our tainted view of the problem, which may in fact when viewed differently be an opportunity. If change is not properly managed, then the scale of problems which may ensue are increased by vast proportions. Trade unions are the best agents to help manage change, when employers and unions work together to find innovative solutions to changes that have to be made, both the workers and the organization benefit.

Problem-solving at the workplace goes beyond the literal workplace itself. It involves ensuring that policies made at a national level are in the best interest of the workers. By placing pressure on governments, trade unions seek the interest of workers and governments are held responsible for adopting policies, ratification of Conventions and enforcement of laws that would affect workers’ rights within the workplace. This means that when problems arise at the workplace, there are clearly articulated laws that would govern how situations should be treated.

Trade unions are the protectors of basic human rights and therefore cannot condone or, as employers themselves, violate rights in the workplace. Unfortunately, many of the issues that arise in the workplace often are adversely correlated to gender mainstreaming issues. Gender equity and workplace violence (inclusive of sexual harassment and discrimination against women) is still at the core of most problems in the workplace. Trade unions have the responsibility to ensure that industrial relations practices set clear frameworks to protect women and promote fair and just practices.

“Problem-solving at the workplace goes beyond the literal workplace itself.”
Contemporary trade unionism has ‘outgrown’ restrictions at the bargaining table and has evolved into a movement that guards the welfare of humanity. The responsibilities of unions have increased greatly and continue to grow, as unions seek to improve every facet of working people’s lives. Problems at the workplace negatively impact the level of productivity and snowballs into a myriad of problems. Problems in the home and community also affect workers on and off the job and are inextricably intertwined, so the problem that requires attention may be quite remote from a work arrangement but still, if left unresolved, will hinder productivity within organizations. The link between problems and adverse issues and workers’ ability to perform shares a symbiotic relationship therefore trade unions are mandated to be effective problem-solvers. Acquiring required problem-solving skills are crucial for trade unions today, if unions are to deliver total quality service to their membership. Working with employers to solve problems in the workplace and rallying workers to be a part of the process, would only bring about a sustainable work environment that would foster greater job satisfaction and escalate the level and quality of the output of any organization. Thus creating a workforce and union membership that adds value to both employer and union.

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Gender Relations in the Workplace
Both Employer and Union

- by Ayanna Samuels
Gender Relations in the workplace is an issue impatient of action. Throughout the Caribbean much work is still needed to facilitate gender equity in both the professional and personal arena. To ensure clarity of terms, it must be reinforced that equity as used here is distinct from equality. The following photo makes the difference between the two terms clear.

According to Merriam-Webster, equity is defined as justice according to natural law or right; specifically: freedom from bias or favouritism, whilst equality is the state of being equal especially in status, rights or opportunities. As the picture demonstrates, you can have equal access to a resource but given the effect of other factors, the level of access provided may not be sufficient to avail of the resource in question.

Globally, gender inequality contributes to losses in economic efficiency and effectiveness and these losses affect both women and men adversely. Globally only 50% of women of working age participate in the labor market compared with 77% of men. Activities to reduce female unemployment will thus have a greater impact on overall poverty reduction as women form the greater proportion of the world’s poor. Female under-representation is therefore a missed opportunity to advance the development and competitiveness of the Caribbean work force. In fact, many professional sector policies often assume a level playing field across gender lines, especially for higher income-earning careers within the sector. However, despite policy commitments to gender equality, significant gaps persist between policy and practice.
Barriers to Gender Equity in the Caribbean Workplace

Listing key among the barriers to gender equity are the following:

1. There is often no reliable data on the participation, number and position of women across various industries in the Caribbean. This compromises the ability of policy-makers to establish gendered policies as same must be informed by and grounded in hard data.

2. Lack of gender mainstreaming in workplace policies, programmes and plans, limits the region’s capacity to create a more enabling environment for gender equity and equality in all professional sectors, which in turn prohibits full realization of our national development goals. There is also gross unawareness of how gender differences impact human, social and economic development at the highest levels of decision-making, resulting in insufficient action to treat with the problem and ergo, perpetuation of the status quo from generation to generation.

3. Unequal pay for work of equal value. In Saint Lucia for instance, women are better educated, but earn less than men. The reality of unequal pay confirms broader institutional, social and structural gender barriers, which promulgate the belief that it is ok for a remuneration gap rooted in gender differences to exist.

4. Unequal responsibility for unpaid work. Unpaid work is defined here as responsibilities of housekeeping, caregiving and parenting. Overwhelmingly the burden of responsibility for same lies primarily with the woman, resulting in an inability to take on more responsibilities or work longer hours at the workplace. For some senior management officials, this can be viewed as lack of ambition on the part of the woman, which sets in place ill-founded conceptions about the desire of women to rise to the highest levels of professional achievement including Board of Directorship positions, etc.

5. Practical gender needs of women often are not considered within the Caribbean workplace. There is often limited access to day care for infants or after-school care for children within the workplace or its nearby environs. Further complicating this reality, whenever such institutions are present there tends to be limited opening hours and/or prohibitive costs. This can have the effect at one end of the spectrum of prohibiting entry into the labour force for the subset of women who bear an extremely disproportionate responsibility for child care, or at the other end of the spectrum can stymie their ability to comfortably balance devotion to their work commitments with confidence and assurance that the needs of their children are being satisfactorily met.

6. Absence of safe transportation. The harsh reality regarding crime in many of our Caribbean nations can render the absence of safe transportation a key limiting factor in the quest of many women to take advantage of capacity building, further studies or training opportunities which may be offered in the evening after traditional work hours.

7. Gender inequality in political leadership. This limits women’s influence on policy-making and lowers the probability that the state will establish measures to cater to the strategic gender needs of women.

8. Gender socialization. Family, school, church, peers and media influence gender roles and contribute to damaging gender stereotypes e.g. girls not good in maths or technical subjects. In fact, research published in the Journal Science on January 26, 2017 indicates, as shared by CNN, that “by the age of 6, girls already consider boys more likely to show brilliance and more suited to “really, really, smart” activities than their own gender.” The report is based on results from US Researchers on a range of experiments on 400 children. As CNN continued to detail, “in one test, researchers told the children a story about a person who was "really, really smart." "We were very careful to leave out any clues as to
the person's gender," said researcher Lin Bian, a Psychologist at the University of Illinois. The children were then asked to guess who the protagonist of the story was. At age five, both boys and girls picked out characters of their own gender. But within a year, that had changed. Boys still picked boys, she said -- but girls were picking boys, too. "Suddenly, at age six, girls became less likely than boys to do this," Bian said.

CNN goes on to share that the researchers believe the overall results imply that from a young age, children are already absorbing the stereotypes of their gender, such as what kinds of activities girls and boys ‘should' be interested in. "When they enter school around five or six years of age, they get to have much more exposure to the cultural message, and that's when they learn a great deal of the information about the social world," Bian said. "It seems to lead girls away from the types of activities that are for really smart kids."

The study itself surmises that these stereotypes become entrenched at a very young age and ultimately discourage adult women from entering professions that require special mental abilities. It goes on to argue that women are 'under-represented' in fields in which members cherish brilliance, such as physics and philosophy.

Bian said social stereotypes are absorbed so early on that by the time girls are young women and in a position to make a decision about their careers, their minds are made up. "They probably don't consider themselves as brilliant," she said. "And when they reach adulthood, it will be very hard to convince them otherwise. We need to do something from early on."

9. Cultural biases. Institutional policies and practices within which and by which we lead our daily lives reflect our cultural biases. These biases limit access to growth opportunities within the work environment. For example, women are often excluded from strong informal and formal networks where they could learn of job and promotion opportunities, etc. A strong example of this is the male only, Masonic organization, the Lodge. Many sterling generational business opportunities have emanated from the strong bonds formed within this organization.

10. Limited visibility of women CEOs, Board Members, etc. The reality is that strong visibility of women in such positions would inspire many other females to follow suit. However, as opined by Madeleine Portwood, a child Psychologist in the UK, "universities and higher education establishments have done a lot to address gender differences and equalize the ratios of boys and girls in typically biased subjects, such as science, but more should be done to achieve the same improvement in the workplace." We still have a way to go to encourage companies to appoint more female directors. There is often an erroneous assumption that gender inequity at the highest levels of management and across Board of Director positions is simply the result of free choice. However this is not so. The reality, is that some women do not strive for leadership positions, high income jobs or big business ventures because of the challenge of balancing paid work and unpaid care-giving work, resulting in the quintessential Work-Life Balance challenge.

11. Pregnancy – some decision-makers view the ability to become pregnant as a reason to not hire women in certain age groups. This obviously leads to a major barrier being presented against the upward career mobility of women.

12. Sexual harassment in the workplace is still a major issue, at the highest levels of the professional arena.
13. Discrimination against women in their quest to access affordable finance is still very much a pervasive issue across our financial institutions. I have heard of personal stories of women going to access loans within the English-speaking Caribbean and being asked, before business can commence, to return with their husband or father, if no husband exists. This demonstrates that there is an inherent belief on the part of some financial institutions that a woman does not have the mental acuity to tend to her financial matters herself and perhaps may also not have the prospective financial value to make her a worthwhile client. This limits the ability of women to inter alia, engage in entrepreneurial pursuits which require an initial investment of capital, or to advance their education and training and hence their careers.

14. Women tend to be more risk averse, which can be explained at least in part by the more protective rules which tend to attend their upbringing, compared to their male counterparts. Later in life the consequences of this manifests in many ways, however a key ramification is that women tend to only apply for career positions when they fulfill all the criteria, whilst men are notably more willing to take the risk to apply for a position even if they do not fulfill all the criteria. This low risk appetite on the part of women significantly constrains their ability for upward mobility.

15. Women tend to be less confident in selling their skills or ideas. Especially within the English-speaking Caribbean, humility and understatedness are hallmarks of the upbringing of the female child, ingrained as important attributes across her personal and professional life. For the female to speak about what she has accomplished is therefore seen as arrogant, boastful and can be used to vilify her amongst colleagues and friends. Many opportunities can thus pass women and girls by as they adhere, as most of us innately do, to their subconscious social coding.
Findings:

The previous 15 barriers demonstrate a multiplicity of gender inequities which present to the disadvantage of women in the workplace. Gender socialization and the resulting discrimination in education and employment undermine stated commitments from the region to inclusive development. Consequences include untapped opportunities across the region, for innovation, efficiency, entrepreneurial growth and retaining maximum value from the workforce along the professional value chain which impairs the Caribbean's socio-economic development.

Solution:

Needed action includes integrating gender perspectives in all workplace policies and programmes to make the workplace a venue where both men and women can thrive. Such steps would also increase access for all to education, training and employment opportunities, which would strengthen the capacity of the region's workforce and in so doing contribute positively to national development. A tangible way of doing so is for companies to join the UN's Gender Equality Seal Certification Programme (GESCP).

As taken from the GESCP's website;

“To close persistent gender gaps in the workplace, UNDP is supporting governments to implement a Gender Equality Seal Certification Programme for Public and Private Enterprises. The initiative leverages the key role that the private sector can play in creating equitable conditions for men and women, which is critical to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Companies which are awarded the Seal are recognized for meeting specific standards to promote gender equality in the workplace. Originally pioneered in Latin America, the Gender Equality Seal Certification Programme is now expanding globally. For participating companies, it can support a more efficient and equitable workplace, increase staff performance, and enhance public image.”

Additionally, the Caribbean basin’s education system and public awareness campaigns must advocate for equal responsibility for unpaid work, breaking down gender stereotypes regarding housekeeping, caregiving and parenting responsibility.

More research is required to determine exactly how teachers, parents and society at large can tackle gender stereotyping, which begins from birth. However, researchers say there are steps that can be taken now. For instance, the aforementioned CNN article shares that “a strong female role model has shown in some instances to ‘inoculate’ girls from social stereotypes.”

Above all, we must be heavily invested in a deep-rooted belief that gender equity must be a key component of the 21st century. To this end, we each must be prepared to play our necessary part in increasing our awareness of barriers to gender equity and work to dismantle same.

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Patriarchy and Power
- by Burton Sankeralli
Violence against women has become very much a major issue in the public domain and discourse. This is a very important development because our record as Caribbean men in this area has not been particularly good. And we do need to take stock and re-learn some key relationship patterns. What bothers me however is that it is very easy for us, men and women, to believe that this is enough. To deal with the issue of "violence against women" alone and not engage the key underlying issue of power.

What makes men engage in such violence? Yes there is the raw brute force that so manifests itself because men are for the most part physically bigger and stronger. But this is the tip of the iceberg. The experience of such physical power is in reality articulated in terms of an overarching power relation where the male is defined as the source of power, violence, control and command. The fancy word for this is “patriarchy”.

It is this question of power that needs to be addressed and we must be careful that this issue of violence against women is not cleverly used by certain elites as a distraction. So that certain men (all too often working class men) are readily demonized but the core issue of power remains hidden.

So violence against women becomes a safe middle class issue. And we can put it together with other safe middle class gender issues, like gender-based discrimination in the workplace and elsewhere or sexual harassment etc. Yes I would sincerely hope that all right thinking decent people would oppose all this (unfortunately I cannot make this assumption) but we are not going to effectively engage patriarchy by remaining in this comfort zone.

Moreover it is not in the middle tier that patriarchy really shows its teeth. To begin with we need a sharper understanding of what patriarchy is. And here I find the tools of analysis of “critical theory” to actually be quite helpful. This analytical approach would in my view correctly maintain that we must understand the oppressive power-relation in terms of the intersection of race, class and gender. Thus we avoid in the process...
any simplistic view of women versus men or a reductionist viewing of the workings of power.

There is oppressing and oppressive elite at the intersection of race, class and gender. When examined this elite, that in actuality presides over the capitalist system, possesses or tends to have a certain race/ethnic/colour/culture profile (I can say a great deal about this but I will stop here). They are principally men (though there are wives, daughters and other associates who belong, who benefit and who are complicit). And they are just that – an elite class; this in an essentially oppressive class structure.

This is the structure that characterizes the patriarchal system. And as I said the full weight does not fall on the middle tier. Actually in certain key middleclass areas – like education and employment – women may even be ahead of men. And while I want to make it clear that even here issues of violence and discrimination are to be taken seriously, it is the working class woman who remains most vulnerable across the board.

But as also ought to be clear the middle class success of women in terms of education and employment in absolutely no way diminishes the nature of patriarchal oppression. Men clearly preside over the elite tier and it is the oppressed lower class that bears the brunt. We have not begun to dismantle the system; if anything it is getting worse.

Moreover, working class men are also the victims of patriarchy in terms of poverty and criminalization and in being shot and incarcerated by the capitalist state apparatus. Indeed, a great deal of working class male violence against women is to be viewed in this light (though it in no way justifies such violence). And here such working class males may readily be caught and processed through the system. Of course elite men don't abuse women!

Having said this it is very often women who most profoundly experience the effects of systemic violence, of poverty, dislocation, privation and raw brute force. More so as it is they who are locked into the roles of family and caregiving.

Finally, I humbly suggest that if we follow this issue of violence against women honestly we would be led to the same place as if we follow all the other burning social and political issues to their logical conclusion. We would be forced to conclude that there is need for fundamental, radical, thorough and permanent change in the dominant power-relation.

There is a word for that! ■
The Contribution of Women in the Development of the Caribbean Labour Movement

- by Professor Rhoda Reddock—University of the West Indies, St. Augustine

A Woman’s Place Is In Her Union.
“The Contribution of Women in the Development of the Caribbean Labour Movement”, written by Professor Rhoda Reddock, was presented at the CCL event to commemorate the 80th Anniversary of the first meeting of Caribbean trade union leaders held in Georgetown in 2006.

Professor Reddock in her paper speaks of the labour movement of which the trade union movement embodies only the industrial arm. There is recognition that to a large extent the contributions of women workers' were made through the general mobilization of workers rather than through the vehicle of the trade union. And even though women, in their own right, were leaders who contributed to the building of workers organizations, not one of these women was invited to participate in the 1926 Conference in Guyana.

This paper demonstrates that women historically have been workers and debunks the theory that the reported statistics on the low labour force participation of women across the region mean that women have not always worked and made substantial contributions to the economies of the Caribbean.

Professor Reddock's thesis is that today the trade union movement has still not fully embraced women workers because the culture and traditions of the movement continue to be masculine. She proposes that trade unions should rethink the way they carry out their programmes and activities “encouraging an open climate of innovation, creativity, critical thinking, and dialogue with other social movements”.

This paper ought to be read by not only those who wish to understand the labour movement's history and the role that women have played but all those who wish to transform the Caribbean trade union movement into a resilient and vibrant vehicle for the workers' agenda.

Paula Robinson
ILO Senior Specialist – Workers' Activities
Good morning sisters and brothers, it is a great honour for me to have been invited to address you at this historic conference; a conference which commemorates the 1926 British West Indies and British Guiana Labour Conference. The 1920s was in some ways similar to our current period. It was the period of economic depression between the two world wars; a period when the traditional economic staple sugar as it is today, (and as with bananas) was facing serious competition from free trade. There were also the worldwide economic difficulties resulting from the wartime situation - high unemployment and an absence of social programmes to support the poor and the disadvantaged. This was also a period of economic liberalism when the concern of the colonial government as many of our governments today was to facilitate the profit-making of the private sector.

The 1929 Colonial Development and Welfare Act for example, was based on the principle that “colonies should have only such services as they could afford from their own private revenue (Wicker, 1958:172; Johnson, 1978:268). It had made available the sum of one million pounds for the entire British West Indies and British Guiana but this sum was to be dispersed in loans or grants, only to be spent on capital projects of an ‘economic’ read profit making nature – that is excluding any spending on ‘social’ services including health and education (CO, 1955:74). It would take the combined impact of the labour disturbances of the 1930s throughout the region, the installation of the Labour government in Britain and the emergence of Keynesian economics to cause a shift in policy in 1940-45 with the new Colonial and Development Welfare Act of 1940 (Reddock,1994:213).

In other ways it was very different from the current period. In the wake of the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, many answered the call for international working-class unity. There was also growing resistance to race and colour discrimination reflected in the revolt of the returning British West Indian Soldiers and the alliances between the labour movement and the Garvey Movement (UNIA) at this time. There was also the sustained mobilizations of the poor, the unemployed and the working classes of this period although formal trade union legislation had not yet been passed (Reddock, 1994:121-122). Despite the non-legality of trade unions this was a period of great working-class consciousness, organisation and mobilisation.

This was true for women and for men, although for decades, Caribbean labour history, as all labour history internationally, was characterised by a glaring invisibility of women. Up to three decades ago, students of history of this region may have been able to safely conclude that women’s contribution to the regional labour movement had been minimal, indeed they would have also questioned the extent to which women, with few exceptions had been workers in the past at all. Indeed, in an interview which I carried out recently a young journalist credited contemporary globalisation and the international media for encouraging Caribbean women to work outside the home (Reddock, 2003).

I am happy that the topic given to me refers to the labour movement and not to the trade union movement as it is my opinion that the introduction of formal, institutionalised and ‘responsible’ trade unionism within this region in the aftermath of the labour disturbances of the 1930s contributed a great deal towards the reduction in the radical potential of this movement as well as of some of the governments that it spawned, but of more relevance to this presentation, I argue that “responsible” trade unionism resulted in an
increased marginalization of women in the regional labour movement along with their potential for its influence. The term labour movement to me goes beyond the trade union movement and also beyond the limitations of accepted trade union practice. In other words we need to remember that the labour movement in the Caribbean existed prior to the introduction of formal Trade Unions.

In an address to the 12th Biennial Conference of the Trinidad and Tobago Labour Congress in the 1990s, later published in 1995 as “The Trinidad and Tobago Labour Movement: A Vision for the Future” I called for the Caribbean trade union movement to be transformed once more into a labour movement in order to confront the challenges of economic and political neo-liberalism which was beginning to rear its head. Today unfortunately, many of these changes have not occurred and the scourge of economic neo-liberalism is being felt everywhere throughout the region and is reflected in the weakening position of unions through the region. I hope that this 80th Anniversary conference can begin to consider a clear strategy for the movement to respond to these challenges.

The discussion so far may seem like a digression away from the main focus of my presentation today – the Role of women in the Development of the Labour Movement in the Caribbean. I hope that as it proceeds however that the links between these comments and the rest of subject at hand becomes clearer.

Women’s Work and Labour in the Caribbean – A Historical perspective

It was for work that the majority of women, as for the majority of men, were brought to this region. The majority came as enslaved or indentured labourers and while the majority of these were from the African continent and Indian sub-continent, it is worthwhile remembering that among the indentured were Chinese, Madeiran Portuguese and even poor whites in 17th Century Jamaica and Barbados for example, while the encomienda and repartamiento labour systems among the indigenous peoples were in many ways precursors of slavery.

This labour was not self-realizing labour but work under virtually non-human conditions which our ancestors through their own efforts sought to humanize. The only housewives in this region for many centuries therefore were the minority of white women plantation owners who accompanied their husbands as most of the Caribbean was not a region of settlement but rather one of extraction. Few wives were based here. Among the few who did come we do have their testimonies of their experiences, reflecting the interests and prejudices of their station – examples of these include – Lady Nugent’s Journal – about Jamaica and Mrs A.C Carmichael – Domestic Manners and Social Conditions of the White, Coloured and Negro Population of the West Indies on St. Vincent and Trinidad. With the exception of The Diary of Mary Prince, we have little self-recording of the experience of slave or indentured women of the region. By the 19th Century housewives may also have been the wives of colonial officials, although as with the women mentioned earlier most of their labour may have been to coordinate the work carried out by the plethora of household servants at their disposal.

Despite this history however, there is a strongly held myth that in the past, long ago, long time – women used to stay at home and take care of children. This may have been true of other regions but it definitely was not the case in this
this one. Yet the ideology that this is as it should be and indeed this is how it was, was strongly perpetuated by colonial domestic ideology through religious institutions, schools, 20th Century labour legislation and changes in the sexual division of labour by the mid-20th century. Domestic ideology i.e. the view that women’s place is in the home as a dependent housewife and men’s role is that of a breadwinner and provider, has always had an important impact on women’s work experience and their legitimacy in the workplace. As a result policy towards women’s waged and un-waged work could be adjusted to suit the changing needs of capital. As noted by Bridget Brereton:

Antislavery activists, clergymen, officials and British policymakers all shared a basic assumption: the ex-slaves should model their domestic lives on the middle class Western family. Husbands should be the head of the family, the main breadwinner, responsible for family support and endowed with authority over wives and children; wives should be dependent and domestic. Of course lifelong monogamy based on Christian marriage should be the norm (Brereton, 1999:102).

Feminist scholars of labour in the late 20th Century questioned the notion that capitalism or westernisation had ‘freed’ women from household drudgery and ‘liberated’ them by providing opportunities for work outside of the home. The post-slavery Caribbean provided a good example of the opportunistic manipulation of notions of ‘worker’ and ‘housewife’. Caribbean women, although, descendants of slaves and indentured labourers brought to the region for work on plantations, were subject to state policy and employment practice based on the assumption that they were not ‘real workers’ (Reddock, 1994).

This ideology could be and still is manipulated when needed and ignored when not, but always serving to de-legitimise and weaken women’s position as worker; to open them to accusations of robbing men of jobs which are rightfully theirs and of neglecting the household and most importantly children which is perceived as their primary responsibility. Last year I concluded a study for the International Labour Organization prepared jointly with Dr Yvonne Bobb-Smith and we observed the strong feelings of guilt felt by women workers today, and the impact which this had on them as they sought to ‘reconcile’ their family responsibilities with their work responsibilities. What became clear to us was the assumption by employers, teachers, the State, male partners and fathers, trade unions, policy makers etc. that women had a responsibility to make these things come together i.e. work and family in whatever way they needed to. This should be their priority and this continues to be a major unacknowledged problem in our midst.

It should not be surprising therefore that with the abolition of slavery, ex-slave women were automatically paid less than men although during slavery they had a higher survival rate than men in the harsh plantation labour. For it is in the fields that the majority of women worked, not in the house as is commonly believed. Similarly, Indian indentured women in Trinidad, were throughout the period paid children’s wages of under 25 cents (the minimum for men) while men could earn up to 40, 50 or 60 cents for similar work. These discrepancies were possible because women were perceived not to be real workers; as less able bodied workers and not as breadwinners or providers.
Although for the majority of women in the early 20th century, earning a living was a normal way of life, many were also breadwinners and providers for their households. As the century progressed they were eventually made to feel that this was something to be ashamed of – i.e. you didn’t have a man to mind you or your man couldn’t afford to mind you or in the case of Indo-Caribbean men, with new attempts to re-establish male patriarchal authority, a secluded wife i.e. one who did not work outside the home was a symbol of higher caste and class status, something which was highly desired and the reason for migration to a new society. In both these cases we see that men’s status as men was closely related to the situation of their women - the degree to which they were independent, autonomous or not directly under their control. The reality was however, that most working-class, Indo-Caribbean and Afro-Caribbean women continued to work in agricultural plots in farming and market gardening or in urban areas as petty traders and service workers.

This situation was compounded by the 1930s with the continuing decline of agriculture and the introduction of mechanisation, which had the effect of removing thousands of women from the workforce and also in the 1930s new labour legislation was passed preventing educated (middle-class) married women from permanent employment in the civil service or as teachers. Writing in 1950, St. Lucian economist W. Arthur Lewis recorded the situation in these words:

In the first place, women have retired from employment into the home. Thus in Jamaica, the ratio of gainfully occupied women to total number of women between the ages of 15-60 has declined from 78 per cent in 1911 to 50 percent in 1943. The same thing has happened elsewhere, for example in the Leeward Islands where the proportion of gainfully occupied women to women of 10 years and over declined from 73 per cent in 1891 to 48 per cent in 1946 (Lewis,1950:3).

But this retirement was not done voluntarily and was something which was continuously resisted up to the present. The general definition of women as housewives meant that their work within the home was naturalized and not valued. Their work outside the home, by extension, was seen as secondary, temporary, complementary and therefore did not need to be fully remunerated and could be ended when no longer necessary.

Women, Labour Struggles and the Labour Movement

According to Lucille Mathurin-Mair, extended breast-feeding was used by slave women to extend leisure hours and resist massa’s work in the last decades of the slave system. This was in a period where intensive efforts were being made to encourage local childbearing and child rearing after the 1807 abolition of the slave trade. This was just one of the many unorthodox means of resistance which were used during slavery, in addition to the more celebrated slave revolts in which women were also involved. In the post-emancipation period, many of these ‘maternal allowances and privileges’ were removed, yet women continued to resist planters’ demands for slave-like labour from themselves and their children (Mathurin-Mair, 1998:25).

Women were also part of the more overt and confrontational forms of labour organisation and struggles although they did not become part of the formal leadership of the labour movement until the 1970s or 1980s in some parts of the region. As an early scholar of Caribbean women’s labour history, trying to piece together a coherent body of work – a piece here, a piece there, I soon
learnt that it was during periods of disturbances, street protests, and strikes that women would become most visible in the historical records. Indeed in Walter Rodney’s History of the Guyanese Working People the index cites one entry under women – Women – Riots pp.205-207. It was in the reports of the Commissions of Enquiry into these events that women would come alive and jump off the page. In other records and at other times it was more difficult. One other factor which I found made women’s contribution invisible was the connotations inherent in the word ‘worker’. Worker like ‘farmer’ and a number of similar nouns are often assumed to be male. One would need a clear understanding of the sexual division of labour in order to recognise women’s involvement in many of these struggles as they may not have been specifically mentioned.

From the inception of ‘wage-labour’ in the Caribbean, women workers have attempted to organise. Prior to the 1940s, this meant organisation as self-employed, artisans, petty producers, traders as well as the unemployed. As early as 22, July 1844, six hundred workers and small producers, women and men met in Couva in Central Trinidad to form the Trinidad Free-Labourers Society (Ramdin, 1982:123). By the late 19th century, labour disturbances occurred throughout the region as a response to the economic depression of this period resulting in the 1897 Labour Disturbances Commission. Nigel Bolland reports that in Jamaica on 8 June 1894 “soldiers, joined by women and men of the town attacked two police stations and roughed up the police at Fletcher’s Land and Sutton Street (Bolland, 2001:175). Similarly in St. Georges, Grenada, “Several hundred men and women attacked the police with rocks, sticks and bottles, some were imprisoned for up to three months (Bolland, 2001:175).” In the 1905 disturbances in Guyana, Rodney notes that of the 105 persons convicted in the Georgetown Magistrates Court as a consequence of the 1905 Riots, 41 were female. He surmises that it would well be that at least one in three “rioters” was a woman, a credible reason being the large proportion of women in the city of Georgetown at the time (Rodney, 1981:206). He notes further that in the stevedores’ strikes of 1905 women domestics took to the streets and even attacked other women who did not support the strike (Rodney, 1982:206).

From the above we can conclude that the majority of women participating in the protests, riots and disturbances of the early 20th century were workers or self-employed traders or artisans. These ranged from workers on sugar estates to domestic workers in urban areas and in the “oilfields”; factory workers, barmaids, store clerks, food packers, seamstresses or dressmakers. In addition to the difficulties of increased prices, low wages and poor working conditions, increasing unemployment was a key factor. It moved these women, as it did the men, to action. But for women, many of them cognizant of their responsibility for their children, the issues were extremely clear.

Early Workingmen’s Associations were formed in many parts of the region, comprising mainly male artisans most of whom would have been self-employed. Bolland also reminds us that many of the early organisations describing themselves as ‘unions’ involved skilled artisans and not wage labourers to which the term ‘unions’ would later be confined. Indeed this reflects the origins of the trade unions in the earlier crafts or trades unions, descendants of the medieval guilds which were combinations of tradesmen for the protection of their craft. In Jamaica the Carpenters, Bricklayers and Painters Union was formed in 1898 and later became the Artisans Union which went on to form the Tailors and Shoemakers Union in 1901. As noted by French and Ford-Smith:

This union organised craftsmen to determine levels of hierarchy within their trades and to press for the recognition of a schedule of rates for the various interests of the skilled. The union therefore centred on the interests of skilled male tradesmen, the majority of whom were not employed to factories on either a regular or full-time basis, but worked as ‘journeymen’ hired for specific jobs or specific contract from time to time (French and Ford-Smith, 1985:260).

2 - While these two extracts reflect women’s participation in these struggles, most of the other reports do not mention them.
Even though the cigar makers or tobacco workers comprised a significant number of female workers, these women were not the focus of the Union's concerns (French and Ford-Smith, 1985:260-261). This was just one of a number of different forms through which workers were organized during this period. In Trinidad and Tobago the early Workingmen’s Association was transformed in 1918 into the more radical Trinidad Workingmen's Association.

After the late 19th Century labour disturbances in the region, three other clear periods of labour unrest could be discerned in the 20th Century – 1918-1919; 1934-1938 and 1946-1947. Between 1900 and 1938 in Trinidad, there were three major labour disturbances - the 1903 Water Riots, the 1919 Labour Disturbances and Strikes, and the more well-known Labour Disturbances and Strikes between 1934 and 1937. Already we see a pattern that was to continue into the 20th Century, one of women's participation in protests, demonstrations and street actions but excluded from the organisations and structures which were to emerge in their aftermath. Indeed in preparation for the 1937 strikes, Tubal Uriah Butler organised a Women’s Committee to prepare meals and deliver them to the strikers. The unfolding of events however were quite different and saw women taking on roles quite different from those anticipated by their labour leader (T&T Archives, Uriah Butler papers cited in Reddock, 2005:29-30).

The labour disturbances and strikes of the early 20th century were part of a wider ferment taking place in the Caribbean region. In Trinidad in 1919, the militant TWA led by Alfred Richards, was involved in what is known as the stevedores strike. This strike involved stevedores, and lightermen who worked on the docks, but according to Jim Barrette, first president of the Seamen and Waterfront Workers Union, this strike also involved the women coal carriers of the Archer Coaling Company who declared their intention to participate actively in the strike (Ramdin, 1982:57).

Although a minority of the waterfront working population, women were active participants in the street protests and riots that accompanied the strike. Witness statements in the confidential Report into the Conduct of the Constabulary during the Labour Disturbances, suggests that women and their children comprised a large number of those supporting the strike. In five out of six quotations describing the crowd the common characteristics were - that they comprised a “low class of people” and the involvement of women. The following are five of the seven statements describing the crowd:

- a mob of 40 to 50, composed of boys, youths, a few girls and women and about three or four men;
- a howling mob; there were men, women and children and young boys, but there were more men of the class who work on the wharf – stevedores, flatmen, boatmen etc. The women very likely were the coal-carrier type of women;
- the crowd were the worst scum of Port of Spain he had ever seen, accompanied by a large number of very rowdy and shouting women, and even more rowdy boys...
- the greater part of the crowd were rowdy women and boys;
- A lot of bad prostitutes egging the men on to smash and break windows, while some of the crowd started to shout “Heave” (Report on the Constabulary, 1919:58-59).

In addition to this, a secret despatch from then governor, J.R. Chancellor, to the Colonial Office on the disturbances reported that one Albertha
Husbands, the Barbadian head of the Domestics Section of the TAW had plans to organise a strike of cooks and house servants and was advocating the use of poison by domestics in the households of employers (CO295/527, No. 17716). After the strike, Husbands was one of a number of Caribbean labour activists resident in Trinidad threatened with deportation. In Jamaica as well, strikes, protests and riots broke out in 1918 and 1919 in urban and rural areas. As in Trinidad, women coal carriers went on strike, but also women banana carriers, women employees at the Match Factory, French and Ford-Smith note that: “In the city too, women were active. At the Match Factory, where the majority of workers were women, workers refused to return to work without an increase in wages after 2 months of unemployment.” They continue:

In 1918, when women workers began their struggles, their tactics drew on the tradition of spontaneous strike and direct negotiation, which had been part of the tradition of protest since the Baptist wave and before. Women led their own independent action; for example, striking coal carriers in June 1918 refused a wage offer, which they thought too low. When the government brought in prisoners to break the strike, the women retaliated by marching from the docks to Kings House to lay their grievance before the Governor himself (French and Ford-Smith, 1984:265).

Interestingly according to French and Ford-Smith, newspaper reports described the women as being more stubborn than men in demanding and sticking to their claim. In addition, they also sent a delegation to the newspaper to contradict statements made about them (The Gleaner, 20.6.1918 cited in French and Ford-Smith, 1984:265.)

The next period of disturbances, protests and riots of the 1930s however, were most significant in that they contributed to a major change in British colonial policy towards the region. Yet I want to stress that the 1930s was part of a continuous tradition of struggle which lasted for most of the period up to the 1940s with the introduction of ‘responsible trade unionism.’ The predominantly Indian sugar workers in central Trinidad staged the first of the 1930s disturbances in 1934 with Indian women taking a major role in challenging the estate authorities and demanding economic justice. This was followed by protests by workers in Belize where according to Bolland on 29, September 1934 about 300 men and women, armed with sticks, went to the Belize Town Board (Bolland, 1992:265). These were followed by other disturbances in, St. Kitts, St. Vincent, St. Lucia, and British Guiana in 1935; in St. Lucia, Barbados, Trinidad in 1937, and in Jamaica in 1938. A detailed examination of the labour disturbances of the 1930s as I have done elsewhere reflect a similar situation, a heavy involvement of women in these events but not in the organisational and institutional structures that emerged thereafter (See Reddock, 2005: Bolland, 1988:265).

The changes in colonial policy in the aftermath of the 1930s disturbances, and the recommendations of the Commissions of Enquiry such as the West Indian Royal Commission (WIRC) which followed, had the following components — reducing worker militancy through the introduction of ‘responsible trade unionism’; strengthening and introducing new state-sponsored social welfare programmes as a response to the social and economic dislocations taking place; and the re-defining of women as dependent housewives. By emphasising women’s location within ‘the family’ through for example the new Women’s Welfare programmes of the Social Welfare Divisions of the colonial governments, they were by extension no longer seen as an integral part of the wage-labouring population and the labour movement (Reddock, 1984).

The broad and more inclusive structures of membership of the early labour organisations, facilitated women’s participation in ways that the more formalised trade unions could not. The Cipriani-led Trinidad Workingmen’s Association of the 1920s for example, was organised into occupational sections which included — seamstresses, domestics, stevedores, fishermen, labourers, porters, clerks and casual and general labourers. In addition there were also regional sections and women’s sections. In other words, there were many opportunities for women to become affiliated to the organisation. Notions of
worker at this time incorporated virtually everyone and facilitated large-scale mobilization. At the height of the TWAs operations in 1927, around the time of this conference there were two women’s sections in Port of Spain – Women’s Section No. 1 led by Eldica Alkins, a Barbadian milliner, The Domestics Section or Women’s Section No. 2, also led by another Barbadian – Albertha Husbands and in 1930 a third Women’s Section was organised by Theresa Ojoe also in Port of Spain.

In September 1929, The Labour Leader, newspaper of the labour movement reported that “owing to the great increase in membership of the California section the female members resolved to work separately and in consequence officers were elected last Sunday for that purpose.” Henrietta Waldron was elected president. In 1934, the San Fernando Women’s Section was started with Mrs L. Wiltshire as president (Reddock, 1994:126). The TWA also had a Youth League, Thelma Williams later of the OWTU, recalled her membership as a child. But in addition many of the earliest attempts at union organisation took place in sectors with large female employment such as the store clerks and shop assistants of Port of Spain in the Union of Shop Assistants and Clerks and the Banana carriers and barmaids of Jamaica in the Longshoremen’s Union. As late as the 1940s Daisy Crick, a housewife, was a member of the executive of the Oilfields Workers Trade Union.

In Jamaica, French and Ford-Smith note the conscious efforts of Bain Alves of the Longshoremen’s Union No. 1 and later the Jamaican Federation of Labour to organise women workers in the early 20th Century. He organised women banana carriers, coal carriers, tramway and railway workers, storemen, and predominantly female hotel workers and barmaids initially through the longshoremen’s Union. By the 1920s women workers were most likely a large proportion of the members of the banana carriers, coal carriers and the Barmen, Barmaid and Hotel Workers Unions which formed part of the Jamaican Federation of Labour which he registered in 1922. Some meetings were organised after 9.00 p.m. in order to accommodate the late working hours of the barmaids. (French and Ford-Smith, 1985:271).

But women workers were not only the beneficiaries of male labour organisers, some contributed in their own right to the building of labour organisations. In Trinidad and Tobago I have identified Helena Manuel and Elma Francois but I am sure that similar women existed in other territories. What is interesting though is that none of these women was mainstream enough or important enough to be invited to the 1926 conference. Indeed even as we marvel at these early brave women who contributed to the development of this movement we should not underestimate the limitations and constraints that still affected most women especially working-class women at this time. Indeed it was working class women who were involved in these movements. Few middle or upper class women could afford to be identified with the indignities of the labour movement and its street activity. Middle class and more educated women of this period were limited mainly to social work which was important as the state was not contributing in this area, and which was considered more befitting of a lady. There were some exceptions however, for example Beatrice Greig, a white women’s movement activist was a member of the TWA and active in its operations (Reddock, 1994).

Helena Manuel, for example, in 1928, broke away from Cipriani’s TWA to form the Trinidad Cocoa Planters and Labouring Classes Association. Her attempts to have it affiliated to the International Federation of Trade Unions failed as she had to go...

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3 - In 1936 the First Conference of British Guiana and British West Indies Women Social Workers was held in Port of Spain, Trinidad and hosted by Audrey Jeffers and the Coterie of Social Workers.
through the national body - Cipriani’s TWA. In 1929, together with Hubert Carrington she formed the Trinidad and Tobago National Trade Union Centre, an umbrella union including all types of labourers (Ramdin, 1982:72). In 1930 it had 2,000 members primarily workers involved in transport (Lewis, 1977: 27).

Similarly Elma Francois, a Vincentian domestic also broke away from Cipriani’s TWA and together with Jim Barrette, Christina King, Bertie Percival, Jim Headley and others formed first the national Unemployed Movement in early 1934 which morphed into the Negro Welfare Cultural and Social Association, a Marxist oriented organisation at the end of 1934. Her organisation working among the poor and working class in urban Port of Spain, rural central Trinidad and in industrial South Trinidad and despite its name, worked among both the predominantly African urban workers and the Indian workers on the estates of central Trinidad. Members Jim Barrette and Christina King recall working with one Pulbassie a sugar worker activist whom they dubbed – Lady Naidoo after the Indian independence activist. The NWCSA was responsible for the formation of three of the trade unions of the 1930s and 1940s two of which continue to exist today. These are the Seamen and Waterfront Workers Trade Union, the Public Works and Public Service Workers Union and the Federated Workers Union now part of the National Government and Federated Workers Union. Additionally, according to Christina King one of the organisation’s founding members – Clement Payne was sent to Barbados in 1937 to support the workers’ struggle in that country.

Despite this early history of labour movement participation in this region, based on her studies of women trade unionists in the late 1970s Lynn Bolles could still conclude that:

*Although women played central and critical roles as providers of organizational and ideological leadership [they] remained invisible, undervalued and were not even relegated to the footnotes in the official narratives and in the majority of academic works on the subject. Basically, women members of organized labour were formally made invisible... The emergence of feminist scholarship both in the region and by North American colleagues made it possible to examine one of the region’s significant institutions from a gender perspective (Bolles, 2005:88).*

It should be noted that this was true both for the unions associated with the Caribbean Congress of Labour as well as the more socialist-oriented unions of the region not affiliated to the CCL In the 1980s The Project for the Development of Caribbean Women in Trade Unions (1982-1985) sought to develop skills and knowledge of communication, negotiation and collective bargaining, labour history, sociology and the economy. By the end of the project in 1984 according to Bolles (2005) 16,000 women had taken part in national and regional seminars which had taken place in The Bahamas, Saint Kitts, Trinidad and Tobago, Saint Lucia and Barbados (Bolles, 2005:93). I dare say that some of the women who were part of this process may be in this room right now.

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4. This project was organised by the Women and Development Unit of the UWI School of Continuing Studies, in collaboration with the ILO, CCL, DANIDA, L/O Norway and the Inter-American Foundation (Bolles, 2005:93).
Bolles suggests that since the 1990s, many women trade unionists have become presidents, general secretaries, deputy general secretaries, heads of departments and heads of labour institutions and the International Labour Organisation has a strong commitment to gender equity (Bolles, 2005:93). It should be noted that in Trinidad and Tobago, for example that Ursula Gittens served as president of the Civil Service Association even before this time and Jennifer Baptiste now serves as president of its successor organisation – the Public Services Association. Yet it is true to say that the Caribbean labour movement is still securely under the control of a male leadership and reflects many of the class, gender and race and ethnic contradictions of our region. The culture and traditions of the movement continue to be very masculine and indeed many issues of special concern to women members with few exceptions still receive limited attention.

In her 1985 research paper for the Cipriani Labour College, entitled “Women in Trade Unions: A comparative survey in Trinidad and Tobago,” Jennifer Baptiste, now president of the Public Service Association revealed that the low level of female leadership within the unions in Trinidad and Tobago was due to: the general effect of the male dominated society and a lack of self-confidence and assertiveness among women (Baptiste, 1985).

But while attempts to increase women's leadership in traditional labour organizations continues to be elusive, we must be aware of alternative and innovative forms of labour organisation and labour movement work, which have emerged in the region which have perhaps been ignored by the mainstream movement. For it is not enough simply to have women as leaders we also need to be open to the new approaches, insights and issues that they may bring to the fore. One example of this is the National Union of Domestic Employees (NUDE) of Trinidad and Tobago and I am sure that there are other examples in the region. From its inception in 1983, the National Union of Domestic Employees (NUDE) of Trinidad and Tobago and I am sure that there are other examples in the region. From its inception in 1983, the National Union of Domestic Employees (NUDE) of Trinidad and Tobago and I am sure that there are other examples in the region.

Since its inception NUDE has waged successful campaigns for legislation to improve the status of domestic and other low-wage workers and has been at the forefront of the campaign for increases to the minimum wage and for amendments to the Minimum Wage Act. In 1990, NUDE became the local representative of the International Wages for Housework Campaign. After years of lobbying, letter writing and other actions, a bill to count women's unwaged work was tabled in parliament by independent senator Diana Mahabir Wyatt. In 1995 the Unremunerated Work Act was passed in parliament making Trinidad and Tobago one of the few countries in the world to pass such legislation. The language of this Act was used as a model for deliberations at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing China in 1995, and inclusion in the Platform for Action approved by delegates. In 2005, for the first time, the Trinidad and Tobago Central Statistical office began making available data collected on unremunerated work (Reddock, 2005b).

Conclusions

In periods of economic crisis, such as in the 1920s-30s or the 1990s-2000s, the restructuring of relations between labour and capital, is an important mechanism used to counter the falling rate of profit. In the then British Caribbean, especially in the period of 1921 through the 1930s, this took the form of: an overall reduction in the labour force, especially in agriculture; the industrialisation of many artisan and own-account operations such as dressmaking, the expulsion of women from the labour force and the increase in the rate of exploitation through longer working hours, larger tasks etc. The actions taken by women workers and working people generally during such times are aimed at constraining the impact of this trend. And in this they have varying degrees of success.

In our current context of economic liberalism there is little discussion of work and labour and the context of worker's struggles and organisation in the English-speaking Caribbean. Any discussion of labour or work is now incorporated into a discourse on human resource management. Through the processes of globalisa-
incorporated into a discourse on human resource management. Through the processes of globalisation and economic neo-liberalism, many trade unions are weaker today and have been unable to come up with new and creative strategies to address the situation and capture the imagination of a new generation of workers. Some of the criticisms of trade unions have been lack of vision, ‘living in the past,’ non acceptance of changes in the international environment and refusal to change existing discriminatory policies and practices against women.

The women’s movement has been one of the more resilient movements to survive the radical period of the 1970s. In my opinion, it has survived because of its innovative and creative approaches and its continuous search for greater and greater democracy although it is now facing a serious backlash from those opposed to its fundamental challenges to the status quo. Maybe it is time for a closer collaboration between these two important social movements. In so doing mainstream trade unions must be willing to substantially transform themselves, to re-think accepted modes of doing things encouraging an open climate of innovation, creativity, critical thinking, and dialogue with other social movements. In this context I would like to propose the following actions:

- The re-thinking of notions of membership beyond the traditional categories of ‘wage-labour’;
- The development of a regional research project documenting the history of women and the labour movement in the region;
- The development of a comprehensive communications campaign to bring the interests and ideas of the movement to a wider audience including young women and young men;
- The broadening of the range of issues addressed by the movement to include for example issues related to reconciling work with family and gender related issues;
- Introducing more creative modalities of operation beyond collective bargaining;
- A review of Human Resource Management curricula in regional educational institutions, making recommendations for the inclusion of labour movement and industrial issues;
- The introduction of gender studies into the regional labour education institutions;
- The introduction of special short courses aimed at introducing gender analysis training to trade unionists.

These proposals I suggest could provide a framework to strengthen and renew the movement in order to confront the many global and local challenges that it now faces.

Thank You
References


CO295/527, No. 17716 - Governor J.B Chancellor’s SECRET Despatch, 12, March 1920. Enclosure No. 11, Précis of Major de Pass’s Report.

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The Voice of Organised Labour in the Caribbean

19th Triennial Delegates Congress.

October 24, 2016

Immediate Past President of the CCL David Massiah (left) and CCL General Council Member James Lambert.
Working session at the 19th Triennial Congress.

Head Table Members looking on.

Head table sharing a light moment during one of the evening’s entertainment presentations.
Congress Delegates in discussion.

CCL National Project Officer Chris Harper (middle) in discussion with members.

Working session at the 19th Triennial Congress (Antigua 2016).
Group photo at the 19th Triennial Congress (Antigua 2016).

CCL Executive 2014 - 2016 (From left) Administrative Staff member Coreen Gibson, 1st Vice President Jennifer Isaacs-Dotson, Assistant General Secretary Gillian Alleyne, President David Massiah, 3rd Vice President Glen Simmons, 2nd Vice President Seepaul Narine, National Project Officer Chris Harper and General Secretary Chester Humphrey.
Caribbean Future Of Work Forum

February 23, 2017

CCL President Jennifer Isaacs-Dotson presenting at the Future of Work Forum (Jamaica, February 2017).
CCL General Secretary Gillian Alleyne delivering her presentation at the 10th ILO Meeting of Caribbean Ministers of Labour: Realizing Decent Work Under The 2030 Agenda (Jamaica 2017).

(From left) CCL’s 3rd Vice President Andre Lewis, CCL President Jennifer Isaacs-Dotson, CCL General Secretary Gillian Alleyne and CCL 1st Vice President Thomas Letang.

CCL’s 3rd Vice President Andre Lewis presenting at the Future of Work Forum (Jamaica, February 2017).

CCL General Secretary Gillian Alleyne delivering her presentation at the 10th ILO Meeting of Caribbean Ministers of Labour: Realizing Decent Work Under The 2030 Agenda (Jamaica 2017).
CARIBBEAN CONGRESS
OF LABOUR

Challenges
to the Trade
Union
Movement
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