

## TWENTY-ONE YEARS OF SERVICE AND SOLIDARITY: THE WAY FORWARD

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This theme '*Twenty-one years of service and solidarity: The way forward*' is a very appropriate one for the Barbados Union of Teachers. It implies a need to review what we in the Union have done so far, and what we must do in the future. This is the task which we will now attempt. We will review the Union's activities over the period, in terms of the vision it had. We will attempt to indicate whether or not its goals were achieved. Then, we will look forward, and suggest what the Union's goals and vision should be in the future. We will accede also to a request to mention some of the leading B.U.T. personalities of those early days, and to give an idea of what the Union faced then. The point of this request is very well taken, since there are now members who were not in the service then, and who do not know of the Union's past.

The Barbados Union of Teachers came into being in the year 1974. The previous decade, the nineteen-sixties, had produced a burst of Black consciousness. We heard of Black social protest led by people like Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King. In Barbados there was a Black Consciousness movement, led by Elton 'Elombe' Mottley, which remained vibrant well into the seventies. And let us not forget the Afro hairstyle, a conscious rejection of self-negation, represented

by processed hair. On the international scene there were, the Cuban Revolution on America's doorstep, the spread of Socialism, the world-wide rise of student protest, Feminism, the struggle for individual rights, and the youth movement.

This was also the decade of independence. Our political leaders were doing progressive things. Throughout the West Indies, there was heroic commitment to the social services, education, and job creation, accompanied by increases in our standard of living, on a level not thought possible in the decade of the fifties.

It would have been strange if the Barbados Union of Teachers had not been influenced by these developments. Broadly speaking the Union's vision was one of freedom, rights of teachers, and rights of our people, through the transformation of teachers from being mere tools of the State, into conscious agents of worthwhile change. It was perceived that we needed freedom from the limitations placed upon teachers.

The first related to identity. Just before then, we had no independent teachers' union. We belonged to the teachers' division of the National Union of Public Workers. We were lost in that huge organization, and teachers' issues were not being met. Freedom was also needed from the

constraints of a bureaucratic mind-set, firmly fixed in the nineteen-thirties and forties, one which did not allow the give-and-take and self-determination associated with professional growth.

We needed freedom from the intellectual boundaries enforced by colonialism, freedom to promote Black consciousness, Caribbean identity, and regionalism. All these freedoms were ours by right, not by concession, and we were prepared to fight for them.

But first we had to establish an independent teachers' union, and gain recognition as the bargaining body for teachers working in those schools directly administered by the Government. This was achieved after a great deal of campaigning, and the taking of a referendum of our members. In 1974, the overwhelming majority of our members voted to set up an independent union, called the Barbados Union of Teachers. Government recognition followed soon after, and we were duly registered. That was the easy part. It was not unlike the transition from being the political opposition, to becoming the government of the day, and having to fulfil at least some of your election promises.

Who were these leaders who mobilized teachers on such a massive scale? They were the leaders of the teachers' division when we were in the N.U.P.W. People like John Cumberbatch, President, Carl Springer, Vice-President, Alfred Trotman, General Secretary, Odessa Parris, Deputy General Secretary, Ken Agard, Treasurer, Rudy Gibson, Public Relations Officer, Harriett Jones, Marjorie Marshall, John Lovell, Edwena

Armstrong, Odilia Regis, Gwen Mattis and Bertram Murray. These were the people who had the vision. They foresaw a teachers' union, strong, unified, moving on to things like registration of teachers, much like the Bar Association, and the creation of a separate Teachers' Service Commission.

A good blend of youth and experience was soon achieved. The immediate task was to create the infrastructure of the union. In quick succession, a stewards' body, Outlook magazine, and committees to deal with grievances, sport, and entertainment were established, staffed by youngsters and newcomers in many cases. These were youngsters like Stanley Mayers, Stewards' Chairman, Winslow Phillips, Cobin Hinds, Carl Hall, Pat Corbin, Winston Gibson, Barbara Brathwaite, Amryl Kinch, Jennifer Watson, Cameron McCarthy, William Skinner, Grantley Elcock, Dereck Ames and Dennis Depeiza, all of Outlook. In Sport, Dennis Murray, Tony Lovell, and Dennis Depeiza. There were Peter Alleyne, before he became "Adonijah", and Annette Trotman, before she became a Cultural Officer, both of them active in dramatic and cultural affairs of the Union. There were many more, and I ask forgiveness for any omissions.

Let us look at the Union's performance during the first several years of its existence. In order to understand why there were so many clashes, one must understand the philosophy which prevailed in the minds of the authorities. They had their origin in the old plantation mentality. The authoritarian tradition of management was still very strong, and teachers

were not emancipated. There was a strong view in the top levels of the Public Service, that teachers should not be unionized. Unions were for blue collar workers, not for white collar employees like teachers. Some Headteachers held this view. It was felt that white collar public servants should belong to an association, not a union.

This is an important distinction, because unions and associations were thought to behave differently. Unions were for cane cutters and dock workers. Associations were for more genteel people, and very importantly, associations did not have the bad manners to become involved in industrial action.

The standard Commonwealth machinery for solving differences between government and its civil service was a thing called the Whitley Council. This was a system whereby the government and representatives of the civil service met regularly to resolve issues. In principle, there was nothing wrong with this. In practice, much good was done by the Whitley Council, but it began to become out of step with the new age of freedom. The representatives of the civil servants tended to be senior civil servants. As heads of departments, and headteachers, there was a distinct tendency for their views and the views of the government representatives to be similar. This is not surprising. They thought alike. There was even a permanent secretaries' division in the civil service union. This raised the important question about their loyalties. Were headteachers and

government department heads, workers, or were they management?

This was at the heart of the matter, and underscores one of the reasons for leaving the N.U.P.W. The junior members, in other words the majority of public servants could not get their views aired. I am told that even at meetings of teachers, the junior ranks of teachers were sometimes shut up by headteachers.

Not all Heads thought this way. Carl Springer, Marjorie Marshall, John Lovell and Ken Agard did not think this way. But they were young headteachers at the time. They challenged the old leadership, and for their pains, were called 'rebels'. They thought that ordinary teachers had the right to voice their opinions. They saw that the Whitley system often failed to resolve major issues.

Therefore, in 1974, when the B.U.T. was established, there was a fundamental philosophical difference between the Union's leadership, and the authorities. The Union's leadership believed in greater democratization of the public service, while the authorities were committed to preserving authoritarianism. There were thus, two opposing views of management, two opposing styles of operation.

There was potential for conflict, but it was not inevitable that there should be conflict. Much would depend of what each side did, and how they did it. The Union had only just been established. It needed time to build itself, and establish its infrastructure, to catch its breath, after the massive campaign for independence, waged through 1973, culminating in the

referendum. It did not welcome conflict, but conflict came, and it was the authorities who struck the first blow.

This was the famous St. Leonard's case. We will quote 'Outlook' to illustrate this and other cases, and hopefully get an idea of the spirit of the seventies, during B.U.T.'s infancy. The issue of 8th February 1978, in reporting the withdrawal of charges against the St. Leonard's teachers, said:

**The case began June 1974 when 40 (sic) teachers of the St. Leonard's Boys' Secondary School staged a placard (sic) bearing protest against an english (sic) contract teacher who had allegedly kicked schoolboys on the compound of the adjoining girls' school...PSC moved against some (28) of the protesting teachers, dismissing 14 who had acting appointments and charging 14 others (appointed) with a view to their dismissal...**

What had these teachers done wrong? They had not been unruly, they had not been violent. They had simply had a little demonstration, with placards, against the alleged kicking of Black Barbadian boys, by a White Englishman. The message here was that teachers who demonstrated their views militantly would be dismissed.

**But let 'Outlook' go on. It says, ...Union intervened July 1974 and demonstrations of solidarity by over 1,000 teachers led to**

**the reinstatement of the dismissed teachers (Sept.-Oct., 1974)** Meanwhile, pending public service trials, the 14 appointed teachers were penalised by transfer and the 14 reinstated teachers redistributed throughout the system, some of them to primary schools...

Note that although the teachers were reinstated, they had lost several months' pay, and all twenty-eight teachers had been scattered throughout Barbados, since in those days, teachers were subject to transfer, like civil servants. One wonders why there had been such harsh action by the authorities, in the first place.

Two attempts to start the trials failed since the Union's lawyers, H. DeB. Forde and Peter Williams had faulted the charges. In other words, the charges were legally improper, and should not have been brought.

The case of the unqualified teachers deserves special mention, because it demonstrates the following important points, that:

1. **Regardless of political party, all governments are teachers' employers, and will act like employers.**
2. **All governments will retrench teachers whenever they think it expedient.**
3. **All governments see workers as aggregates, and not as people.**

The unqualified teachers were people who had been taken into the teaching service when economic growth and emigration drained Barbados of a huge proportion of its trained teachers, and qualified school leavers. The government of the day had to recruit school leavers who did not have the required number of certificates to join the teaching service. Some had only one certificate, namely English Language. So serious was the teacher brain drain, that this recruitment continued for some thirteen years. Then, suddenly came the oil crisis, the drastic reduction of emigration opportunities, the slowing of domestic economic growth, and the sudden availability of school leavers with large numbers of certificates.

The 1975 government moved with indecent haste to dump those three hundred unqualified teachers who had worked so hard to prop the system up, during the brain drain. This included a St. Marks teacher who was retrenched as soon as she went on maternity leave. The Union secured a stay of retrenchment, and called on its members to teach these unfortunate comrades voluntarily. We teachers, including our overworked President, John Cumberbatch, held 'O' Level classes at B.U.T. Headquarters, for as many years as it took for those teachers to qualify for the service, and consequently, for entry into Erdiston Teachers' College. We closed ranks and saved our colleagues. That was the kind of solidarity which existed in those days. In the case of the St. Marks teacher, the Union secured her maternity rights, and reinstatement.

After the change of government in 1976, the new government continued the policy. Throughout 1977, unqualified teachers were sent home. Outlook, 16th March, 1978, reports that "...the General Conference of BUT (sic) have pledged to stand firm in demanding the 'reinstatement or compensation' of their colleagues recently dismissed by government ostensibly because they were unqualified..."

It was not until July 1978, that government decided to compensate the dismissed teachers, and to find places elsewhere in the public service, for the others. Why did it take so long? Why did two different administrations act in the same way?

In 1976, government legislated public servants' salaries, without settlement, for the first time. Teachers must remember that government is a special kind of employer. It can pass laws, and it can attempt to justify overlooking teachers' needs, by claiming to have responsibility for the whole country. Public servants' salaries can be legislated, or even cut, 'in the interest' of the country. No other employer can do that.

The first oil crisis had just ended. Prices had gone 'through the roof' in spectacular manner. By government's own calculation, the cost of living had risen by one hundred and twenty-four percent, since the previous salary increase in 1974. This brought the Union to its first salary negotiation as an independent body, and its first joint negotiation.

Nineteen meetings had been held, without agreement. Government had reached the limit of its offer, and would concede no more.

The Prime Minister decided to go to Parliament, nevertheless. On the morning when Mr. Barrow arrived in the Public Buildings yard, he found teachers waiting for him. Outlook's issue of the 6th September, 1976, shows large numbers of teachers with their placards. The caption says, "**...THIS DEMONSTRATION OUTSIDE PARLIAMENT** on Tuesday, 22nd June, was the only public protest against Government's breach of the principles of collective bargaining in the 1976 Salaries Negotiations..."

This was serious. Two years later, Outlook on the 16th March, 1978 informed its readers that "...**The Barbados Union of Teachers' General Body has rejected wage restraint and has decided to act in concert with other unions in the country to secure 'minimal' demands....**" Government had met unions, separately, for some reason, and had proposed wage restraint. Outlook continues: "...The Body was told of an attempt by Government to exclude B.U.T. from the negotiation table through a letter accusing B.U.T.'s President--John Cumberbatch of breaching 'confidence' in negotiations...." Cumberbatch told the General Body that the letter was "...insulting and intimidatory and irrelevant to our right as a trade union to negotiate on behalf of the workers..." Needless to say, that letter was never replied to, and the Union attended negotiations, but it is illustrative of the kinds of scare tactics which the authorities used at the time. Being a Union leader is definitely not for the faint-hearted. The B.U.T. continued to be the

only union to protest the other four legislated salary increases.

Let us now look at the issues in the schools meals case. On 16th March, 1978, Outlook announced that "Beginning April 10 teachers will cease to be involved in any aspect of the school meals operation..." **pointing out that this was "...not a 'sanction' in relation to any... grievance but an issue in itself--- Teachers involvement in school meals will be stopped 'period'..."**

Teachers were being deprived of their lunch periods to do school meals work, were being burdened with clerical work related to school meals, and were being treated as if school meals duties were rightfully theirs. According to the law, teachers were entitled to one hour's lunch. Our view was that a teacher could do any non-teaching task at any time of day, so long as the authorities accepted that such things were voluntary.

No consultation took place when school meals duties were introduced. The Government simply introduced school meals, and told teachers that they would have to do the duties. And teachers did them. But that had occurred in the days when Headteachers dominated the teachers' organization. These were the Whitley Council days. That constituted a unilateral change in teachers terms and conditions of service. In those days, it was not thought necessary to negotiate such things with teachers. Here was a very important principle at stake. The Union's main points were as follows:

1. School meals duties were not in teachers' job description.

2. Secondary school teachers did not have school meals duties, yet our terms and conditions of service were identical.

3. By doing school meals duties, teachers were contributing to unemployment, by doing jobs which ought, properly, to be performed by others.

The teachers were not prepared, any longer, to have the authorities thrust any extra tasks on teachers' backs, especially without the dignity and courtesy of consultation. People are always coming up with all sorts of ideas which they want to see done in schools, and then what do they say? They say they will get the teachers to carry them out. They do this as if we do not have families too, as if we do not have personal business too, and worst of all, as if we do not have a choice.

Ever since 1969, teachers representatives had recommended that there be an overlap between the salary scales of Erdiston trained non-graduates, and the graduate teachers. At the time, a teaching novice with a degree, but without any teacher training, could join the service, and immediately earn more than trained non-graduate teachers. Graduates without any administrative responsibility were earning more than primary school heads. This clearly placed academic qualifications above professional qualifications and experience. How could the Union support this?

This had been ignored since 1969. Regradings cost money, and they increase the

government's recurring wage bill. We mentioned above that Government can claim to have overall responsibility for the country's welfare. Increased expenditure can be said to be 'not in the country's interest'. The Oil Crisis with its rapid reduction of the standard of living brought a new urgency to this matter. These Erdistonians were people with small children of their own to support.

In January 1976, General Secretary, Alfred Trotman, told Outlook that the Union was raising the matter of overlap again. That was the same year, you will recall, when the government legislated salaries for the first time. Thus, there was no regrading. The new government was just as reluctant as the old. The Union had to cause serious disruption in the schools through a campaign of rotary sickouts for several weeks. In the end the regrading was granted, but not before the famous Barbara Smith case.

In a way, this case was a by-product of the regrading battle. Feelings had run very high, both in the Union and among the authorities. The Prime Minister had made a television appearance in which he gave his side of the regrading matter. Mrs. Smith, a headteacher, and executive member of the B.U.T., was the next morning discussing the matter, privately with her colleagues, in the school yard. She said something which was uncomplimentary about the Prime Minister, not knowing that she was overheard by one of his supporters. Mrs. Smith received a telephone call after school, that same afternoon. It was from the Permanent Secretary. He informed her that it had come to his attention that she had spoken in a certain way about the Prime Minister, and he

instructed her to report to his office the following morning, about the matter. Mrs. Smith told him that she was unable to attend, because the Union had called a strike meeting of all its members for that same day, that it had notified the Ministry, and that she, as an executive member, was duty bound to attend. Mrs. Smith attended the Union's strike action, and was suspended without pay for not having reported to the Permanent Secretary, as instructed.

This case involved two major constitutional matters. The first is freedom of speech. The second is the freedom of bona fide trade union action. The authorities were wrong on both counts. Needless to say, Mrs. Smith was reinstated, but the case shows that in those days the authorities were acting with desperation to deny the teachers what was rightfully theirs. It shows that a government bureaucracy has enormous coercive resources, which can stretch right up to Cabinet, and the Prime Minister. It also demonstrated the lengths to which the authorities would go to put the Union in its place.

The daily grievances of teachers against headteachers, education officers, and other authority figures, reflect similar attitudes to the ones shown already. There are many ways in which the Union's work can be made more difficult. In 1977, the Minister bluntly refused to allow the Union to circulate a questionnaire to teachers in schools. The questionnaire was intended to elicit information about the functioning of 'C' stream students who were being kept in school after the age of fourteen years plus. There was not yet compulsory

education to age sixteen, and the government had recently made a policy to keep in school, those students who normally would have finished school at age fourteen. The decision was made to keep an election promise, and was based on social reasons rather than educational ones. The declared reason was to keep these youths off the streets. The Union's position was that it did not oppose their retention, but did not wish them kept in school without proper, meaningful programmes. Ministry's position was that the Union could not have legitimate access to teachers in their 'professional' capacities. This was a clear case of trying to hinder the union in getting accurate information, which it needed. B.U.T. had already asked the Ministry for the information on the details of their 14+ programme, and had been refused consistently.

In 1978, Outlook staff members and Erdiston students, Dennis Depeiza, and Richard Ames, were harrassed by the Erdiston authorities, and threatened with failure of the course, because embarrassing information about the College had appeared in Outlook. After a long period of this kind of pressure, Ames had to have medical attention.

In 1979, a teacher received a letter from the Ministry, threatening him with dismissal, because, according to them, he had been rude to an Education Officer. By then several members of Outlook staff had quit under pressure, and one actually left the teaching service. Also in 1979, instructions were sent to the Director of the National Stadium, to the effect that the Ministry was cancelling the B.U.T. primary sports, and

that teachers at the Stadium should be so informed. The Director carried out his orders, and the sports were aborted.

It should now be clear that these were difficult days. The Union was allowed no respite. What we have seen demonstrated clearly so far, is that the authorities were not accustomed to dealing with teachers representatives as equals, and thought that the Union was usurping their position. Equally, it should be clear that the B.U.T. would not accept treatment as anything other than equals, and intended to involve itself deeply in any matters which affected teachers.

In addition to all this, the Union attended the Caribbean Union of Teachers' Conferences, and executive meetings. It tried to come to grips with the task of living out its mission, at the regional level. At the time, the C.U.T. was in the grip of an unprogressive, repressive, and in some ways, corrupt clique. At the same time, the B.U.T. learned of the plight of fellow unions which were operating in a climate which was far more hostile than our own. Who among us still here can forget the firing of Union President, Mike Brown of St. Vincent, and several of his colleagues? Ten Vincentian teachers had been jailed without bail for taking part in a march. Who can forget the tear-gassing and beating of teachers in Antigua, also for marching?

John Cumberbatch, was also President of the Caribbean Union of Teachers. He went to both of those islands to speak to the authorities, on the teachers' behalf. On one occasion, he had to leave Antigua, hurriedly, because the Government there planned to arrest him, for what

they considered to be meddling. John took responsibility because the Secretary General would not go. He did not like Mike Browne's socialist politics, and so refused to do his duty. Needless to say, that Secretary General and his clique were ousted, and Barbados was chosen as C.U.T.'s Headquarters.

What of the Union's professional thrust? Apart from helping teachers to get 'O' levels, the B.U.T.'s Professional Development Committees ran courses in remedial teaching, held a conference on educational policy, fought to have primary education upgraded, attacked elitism in schools, as perpetuated by the eleven-plus exam, and constantly exhorted teachers to see their professional role as one of uplifting the society, promoting social justice, as well as the normal requirement for pedagogical and pastoral effectiveness.

The Union did not neglect social, cultural and sporting activities. Merry Hill used to be a hive of activity. There were tea parties, a B.U.T. choir, a volley ball club, a Karate club, teachers' sports, primary school sports, secondary school sports, because the traditional interschool sports excluded comprehensive schools, cultural and dramatic shows, solidarity dances, other fetes, and so on.

Do not think that all this was easy. The Union's officers were all practising teachers, doing union work voluntarily. For them, union work became a second job, for which they were unpaid. The Union established a vibrant shop stewards' body, trained them at the Labour College, mobilised members through numerous

area meetings after school, held regular general meetings to keep members updated, produced 'Outlook', which was in those days a very militant, fighting news organ, and took massive industrial action. Executive members, stewards, and co-opted volunteers worked night and day, through their week-ends, vacations, bank holidays, and generally put their health and family life at risk. Members do not realize how hard union officers have to work on their behalf. At the same time, the Union's doctrine was that each officer had to pursue personal commitment to professional excellence at school, in order to ensure that no excuse could be found to accuse the union's leadership of professional negligence, and also, to set the example of professionalism.

Towards the close of 'seventies', world conservatism began to rise again, the era of Thatcher, and Reagan. Conservatism in the Caribbean also began to increase. Trade unionism, worldwide, began to come under increasing attack. A clear example of this is Reagan's firing of striking air traffic controllers. In Barbados, the Union lost much of the tremendous support it used to enjoy with the media, and attacks on the trade unions became more frequent.

The financial situation worsened as well. International recession led two different administrations to approach the International Monetary Fund, with the consequent large number of lay-offs in the Public Sector. Legislation of salaries, without union agreement, became the norm. The Union now had to face a hostile economic regime which has existed since

early 1976, a growing anti-union feeling among the general public, savage teacher-bashing, and more recently, structural adjustment.

Many teachers do not understand that the union cannot stop government from legislating salaries, and a measure of disillusionment has crept into the ranks. After a blaze of spectacular victories, the union has had to fight a long defensive battle, in very adverse conditions, while striving to keep its hard won gains. The fact that this is the plight of unions throughout the world has not sunk home in the minds of many members. They do not see that the union needs them now more than ever, if it is to keep teachers' heads high.

What then, is the way forward? What service must the Union provide in the future? What will teachers need? Why is it that so many teachers seem apathetic towards their union? One view is that the Union has been too successful. This view suggests that militancy was necessary in the seventies, but that teachers no longer perceive it to be needed, since they have gained higher pay, and most of them are graduates now, seeing themselves more as professionals and less as workers. According to this position, the major battles have been won, so that teachers have become complacent. Another view is that the Union is doing nothing. Teachers cannot get pay increases, study leave, and so on, and all the Union is doing is talking. Another position could be that many of the old stalwarts have left the service, or are now less active, and the newer members, who joined after the early days, after

certain battles had been won, were not imbued with the need to be militant.

Let us hold these speculations for the time being. Let us look at this twenty-first century which many of us are so excited about. We see a number of things which were not there in 1974. They are, for example, a mature and formidable womens' movement, insecure, disorganized men who are failing to achieve their potential, increasing gang violence, drug abuse, and murder among our youth, continued fracturing of family life, the renewed struggle between north and south, now that the collapse of communism has ended the east-west aberration. We see the eventual redundancy of small island states, and the hardening of attitudes towards Blacks in the diaspora. The burst of liberalism in the sixties has perhaps expended itself, and the old, mean, anti-humanitarian power plays are reasserting themselves. Devaluation, though temporarily averted, still lurks in the wings.

Is my crystal ball correct, or is it cloudy? Is the future more promising? Do teachers know? Does anybody know? If no one knows, how will we find out?

The answer is, through research. One great service which the future teachers' Union must provide the membership is access to accurate information concerning anything which will impinge upon the economic or professional interests of the teacher. In the case of economic matters, It seems clear that we may face austerity for much longer than we think. The rich world is ridding itself of incumbrances like concessions to small, Black, ex-colonies. Moreover, their

attitude increasingly seems to be that our social programs have been too extravagant and that we need good doses of public service pruning before they will lend us freely.

The Union may well do members a good service by doing consumer research to find out how they can best spend their money. Co-operative ventures like a buying club, or perhaps a minimart might be very useful also. This may not be as foolish as it seems. In the nineteen-twenties and thirties, the workers' movement did just that. Economic deprivation was far greater than it is today. The Working Men's Association, and the Barbados Workers' Union, both tried to improve the workers' economic lot through co-operatives. If Government is unable to grant worthwhile pay increases, it might consider lowering, or waiving customs duties on items imported by, or for, bona fide co-operative ventures.

The Union could also keep members up to date on financial matters like interest rates, investment opportunities, government shifts in fiscal measures, and advise them on the best ways of coping with them. Information about auctions, other sales, matters of real estate, and so on could prove very useful. There are wealthy people in Barbados who are insiders, privy to information like this. Despite their better financial situation, they do not scoff at such things. The Union could even organize auctions occasionally, so that members could buy or sell, as they wish. This may not sound like high trade unionism, but it may well be prudent frugality, promoted by the Union, for its members' benefit.

If this sounds like advocating non-militancy, and a decrease in the usual activities of a union, one could not be more wrong. The Union will always have to be prepared to fight, and take industrial action if it has to. The Union will always have to be prepared to fight as long as the teaching service is organized on unmitigated bureaucratic lines. Bureaucracies breed conflict. It is in their nature to be autocratic, hierarchical, and stifling of initiative and creativity. It is not the people who are bad, it is the system. As long as the collegial approach is shunned, teachers will always be in a superordinate/subordinate relationship. As long as subordination is an entrenched organizational feature, there is always the possibility that coercion may be used. The Union will have to continue to keep teachers imbued with the spirit of watchfulness, and the willingness to take the correct union action if their rights are infringed. And teachers rights are still being infringed in some schools.

This means that one service which the Union will have to pursue very vigorously is a campaign to reduce the complacency which so many members speak of. The Stewards body must be revived, and trained, as a matter of urgency, because a good steward can often solve a problem correctly, without its growing out of proportion, and eventually becoming a big industrial problem. Stewards also are the Union's eyes, ears, and mouth at the work place. A vibrant stewards' body ensures a vibrant membership. It also creates a nursery where new generations of Union leaders can be nourished with the correct

tenets of unionism, and so ensure that continuity of the Union's vision and objectives will prevail.

This has been a problem for the Union. Because of the voluntary nature of the work, and the great strain on executive members, experienced officers withdraw from union service after a few years. At times, interested, but inexperienced people have to fill senior positions on the executive. By and large they have performed well, but sometimes, some little important pearl has been lost by the wayside. I fear that the stewards' body is such a pearl.

The Union's professional thrust must be increased in the near future. Teachers, as professionals, should be the cutting edge of innovation in the service. We teachers crave professional recognition, yet we sit and wait for the Ministry, or some course, or some visitor, to give us new ideas.

Even though I am a militant trade unionist, I have always felt that the Union and the Ministry could serve the country well by co-operating with each other in professional matters. We should be able to do this without compromising our respective positions as workers or employers.

In Japan, the economic wonder of the world, this principle is in regular practice on the shop floor. Japanese workers are encouraged to submit ideas for improvement of design, increased efficiency of a particular operation, and so on. The White Western industrialized countries are studying Japanese management methods, and are incorporating things which are culturally capable of adoption. One such adoption

is the serious, ongoing consultation between policy makers and practitioners, with shared responsibility for organizational improvement.

This makes even more sense in the field of education. These are not the days when most teachers were pupil teachers, having to learn on the job, instructed by headteachers, and education officers who were trained already. Nowadays, most teachers are trained graduates. Many of them are as experienced as their principals, and they are sometimes more highly qualified. There can be no valid reason why, after successive administrations have made such great financial outlay for teacher training, that training should be under-utilized simply because the Union and the Ministry cannot come together as professional equals to push the horizons of education in Barbados even further. Such an arrangement need cause no damage to the standing or authority of the Ministry.

On the contrary, if the Ministry and the Union could arrive at such an agreement, and strongly encourage its implementation in schools, we might well find that the incidence of conflict might be greatly reduced. If teachers and principals spend too much of their time suspecting each other, they have less time for creative work. As it stands, principals are not yet providing the amount and quality of instructional leadership, and professional development which they should. Research has shown that they are still hobbling themselves with things like writing late slips, in other words, things which a clerk could do.

In any case, whether or not the Union and the Ministry co-operate in professional development, the Union is duty bound to encourage greater professionalism in the service, and to take the initiative. Another great service which the Union could provide for its members, is a teachers' research centre, where the Union would have a research team of its own, dedicated to educational research, and could provide advice, and opportunities for teachers to conduct their own research. How do we really know what our students think? How best can we decolonize our curricula, syllabuses, and texts? In what areas is the Caribbean Examination Council's History syllabus lagging behind the research of the last twenty years? How best to advise today's boys and girls to co-operate, and live in mutual respect, in the light of the political imperatives of modern feminism? What should constitute boys' upbringing in the light of the womens' redefinition of themselves? We do not know. Why is this? the answer is that nobody has done the necessary research, discussion and analysis. But, we are supposed to know. Our pastoral role requires it of us. What are we waiting for? We do not deserve professional status if we are unwilling to push forward the boundaries of our own, special body of knowledge.

In summary then, the B.U.T. was born, and grew up in a very idealistic, activist period. This created a Union which was not prepared any longer, to be ignored by successive administrations. It confronted the authorities when it had to, for as long as it had to. At the same time, the Union sought sincerely, to develop

teachers, professionally, culturally, and to increase commitment to justice, and social awareness.

Meanwhile, the climate in which unionism has to function has grown very hostile, in terms of economic stringency, and too, in terms of increasing public antipathy to unionism. Unions no longer enjoy the level of public or media support which they did. Members now display complacency, or resignation.

Since the near future seems to hold little promise of early improvement in the local and international industrial climate, the Union may have to consider ways of increasing teachers spending power through co-operative effort. This can be enriched by doing consistent research in the area of consumerism, and regularly informing teachers of this consumer intelligence.

Teachers, and their Union must contribute vigorously to the growth and development of educational knowledge in Barbados. The creation of a teachers' centre can contribute to this effort. The Union should seek to co-operate with the Ministry in this kind of endeavour.

Finally, the Union must be prepared to fight as long and as hard as possible, if the need arises. In discussing freedom, Sir Keith Hunte once told me that the price of freedom is eternal vigilance. I commend those words to my Union.

S.O. MAYERS

2/4/95.