

**CTUSAB'S AGENDA**  
**PAPER DELIVERED TO THE FULL SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP**

**Hon. Freundel Stuart - Prime Minister of Barbados**

**Ministers of Government**

**Permanent Secretaries and other Government Officials**

**Mr. John Williams – Head of the B'dos Private Sector Association**

**Mr. Cedric Murrell - President, CTUSAB**

**Specially Invited Guests**

**Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen**

**Members of the Media**

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Today the responsibility has been entrusted to me to present the agenda of the Congress of Trade Unions and Staff Associations of Barbados for 2012-13, to this meeting of the Full Social Partnership.

I must offer the comment that today's exercise accords with the agenda which the social partnership has set itself, as set out in part in the Preamble of Protocol VI. Specific reference is made to paragraph 3, which reads:

"Further recognizing that the success of any sustained social and economic progress in Barbados will depend to a considerable extent upon their on-going individual and collective commitment to a philosophy of governance which is characterized by participatory democracy and the subjugation of their sectorial interests to the national good."

It is CTUSAB's expectation that today's meeting will go beyond identifying the positions of the social partners, but will be followed by a plan of action that will be fully implemented, monitored and evaluated. It is also the expectation that going forward, the timetable for meetings of the full social partnership will be satisfied. Every effort must be made to utilize this mechanism, as is provided for under successive Protocols, so as to facilitate dialogue and decision making, which pertain to setting the agenda, identifying approaches and strategies in a proactive way; towards addressing matters of national importance.

Before moving into the substance of this presentation that speaks to labour's agenda, I wish to make the point, that CTUSAB puts emphasis on a holistic approach to national development. It therefore sees the need to clearly focus on the best approaches and strategies to meet the goals of the National Development Plan.

This apart, labour is conscious of the peculiarities of the time, where the impact of the ongoing economic recession, has forced the nation to re-strategize, as it attempts to address how best to tackle the problems that beset it, that potentially can constrain its growth and development.

To start with, labour recognizes the significance attached to developing and maintaining an enabling environment. This is absolutely necessary if Barbados is to position itself to be far more competitive in the global market place. CTUSAB views that in order to further national development at this time; it is a must that the focus is maintained on promoting employment creation, enterprise development, entrepreneurship and innovation which are key pillars that are identified under the national strategic plan.

Whilst it is important to set and pronounce on an agenda, it is important that the actors in this tripartite arrangement recognize that there is an urgent need to address those shortcomings that potentially can undermine any progress that can be made. In this small island state where our human resource remains the main asset, it is important that the social and economic needs of the populace are met, if the country is to benefit from maximizing the output potential of its people.

As a starting point, labour is committed to promoting the Decent Work Agenda. Of the several issues that may be addressed coming out of the Decent Work Agenda, the issue of decent pay for decent work remains paramount. This brings to the fore the long outstanding matter of a national minimum wage.

For whatever reasons, successive governments have not acted on this matter. This is a fundamental issue, for it directly impacts upon the most vulnerable members of our working population. CTUSAB intends to press for action on this matter, as the introduction of a national minimum wage can serve to arrest the level of poverty, the exploitation of vulnerable workers across employment sectors, and the social dislocation that is seemingly evident.

The escalating cost of living, coupled with job losses is impacting on the Barbadian populace. It is also true to say that impact of the cost of living is being felt by public sector workers, who have not had a salary increase over the past two years. The fact that public sector workers have not placed a demand on government to finalize a new two year Wages and Salaries Agreement (2010-2102), is itself a testimony of labour's commitment to promoting the interest of the nation. It cannot be ignored that public sector workers have in like manner as in the 1991 economic crisis, once again made a significant contribution.

Notwithstanding the prevailing economic circumstances, it is appropriate and expedient that the collective bargaining process is engaged. CTUSAB therefore signals to government its intention to submit a body of proposal for the two year period of 2012 - 2014.

The Congress commends the government for following a no lay off policy within the public sector, and is appreciative of the role played by the private sector in minimizing the level of job losses. CTUSAB will as part of its agenda, continue to call on government and private sector employers to seek to maintain conditions of employment, in an environment where pay increases may not be possible. We also entreat the private sector to continue the policy of jobs first, lay-offs as a last resort except where a negotiated position is reached with the union.

The productivity of the nation is said to be the wealth of the nation. In the prevailing economic climate, it would be unwise to ignore the signals which indicate that there is low productivity amongst the workforce. It is reasonable to conclude that the net result will surely be manifested in the annual GDP. Therefore it is important that we reflect on the results of the 2011 NISE Employee Engagement Index Survey. The findings have revealed that the engagement of workers has emerged as a major shortcoming. Barbados can ill afford to have 70 of every 100 employees not working at their full potential.

This evidence suggests that immediate action must be taken to turn around this trend. It is proposed that both government and the private sector further invest in the National Initiative for Service Excellence, so as to enable it to effectively respond to meet the training of public and private sectors workers, as well as to undertake qualitative market research. Based on the significant importance that attaches to the role of NISE, it ought not to have to fiercely compete with other programmes that are of lesser national value, for the scare financial resources that government has available to it.

CTUSAB strongly believes that the training and retaining of workers will contribute significantly to the motivation, improve performance and the effectiveness of workers. CTUSAB is aware of government's commitment made over two years ago, to allocate \$10 million to the proposed Training Fund. It is a matter of concern that to date the programme has not been implemented. CTUSAB will continue to monitor this matter, as it is our understanding that for some time now, the funds were ready for disbursement from the National Insurance Scheme to the TVET Council.

I now briefly address some shortcomings that call into question the efficient functioning of the public service. The slow processes followed engaged in the public sector, are said to be impacting negatively on business facilitation. The systems and processes are also known to contribute to lack of prompt action and decision making on matters that require immediate attention. For some time now, the need for Public Sector Reform has been identified. It matters now that the efforts of the Office of Public Sector Reform are supported, if positive results are to be achieved in the short and medium term.

Coming out of the BSTU/Alexandra School Impasse, the need for the training of public officers in matters of Industrial Relations has come to the fore. It is critical that Senior Public Officers are exposed on an ongoing basis to such training. Equally so, CTUSAB

cites the need for training of those who are appointed to Boards of Management of Secondary Schools and to Statutory Boards. This has the potential of rendering all these persons more effective in the discharge of their responsibility.

The declining morale within the Public Service is of concern to CTUSAB. Many public officers have the expectation of being appointed and/or promoted. The process of human resource management has become too cumbersome, and hence there remains a large number of acting appointments in Teaching, Nursing, Prison, Fire and the General Service. This has become as a cancerous growth on the effectiveness and efficiency of the service sapping the daily energies of its workers.

CTUSAB supports a comprehensive review of the Public Service Act, and has already submitted a list of proposed changes to government. The Congress anticipates that government will expeditiously initiate complete review of the Act and the processes of managing the public service.

CTUSAB has in the past been calling on government to bring into law the Employment Rights Bill, the Sexual Harassment Act, Minimum Wage Legislation, and to proclaim the Safety and Work Act. CTUSAB believes that these pieces of legislation are critical to promoting the Decent Work Agenda, and will not cease in intensifying its efforts at driving the government of the day to implement these pieces of legislation.

In addition, CTUSAB will also focus attention on a review of all existing labour legislation, as it believes that those existing archaic pieces need to be replaced by modern and progressive pieces of legislation. It is proposed that an ad-hoc tripartite committee is established for this purpose.

CTUSAB intends to advance a case for the creation of a Protective Services Commission, as proposed by the Constitution Review Commission in 2005. Further, it will continue to reiterate its call for the establishment of a Teaching Service Commission.

The constant increases in food prices which the island is experiencing, requires that CTUSAB satisfies itself that mechanisms are set in place to closely monitor the prices of goods. In the current climate, CTUSAB impresses upon the authorities the urgency to accentuate a grow local/buy local campaign. This is important if Barbados is to reduce the \$409 m import food bill which was recorded in 2011.

The existing volatile economic climate requires that carefully identified strategies are implemented in order to mitigate the level of stress which is imposed on the productive sectors of the economy. CTUSAB identifies with the development of entrepreneurship as a key pillar, as a driver to the growth and development of the economy of Barbados. It therefore remains committed to championing the promotion of entrepreneurship and innovation.

Labour recognizes that there is no one solution that can arrest the economic challenges of the time, neither is it insensitive to the challenges facing government. It however

remains adamant that government needs to exercise prudence in spending, and moreover to address the issue of wastage. The Congress will therefore support a government's programme that is directed at prioritization and rationalization.

Turning attention to the subject of sustainable development projects, CTUSAB sees this as a viable strategy in furthering the economic development of Barbados. In the pursuit of this, labour urges the containment of foreign borrowing. In its stead, the attraction of foreign investment is the preferred option. On this point of sustainable development projects, CTUSAB signals to government and the private sector, that it would welcome their support in bringing on stream, it's Memorial to the Barbados Labour Project at Three Houses Park, whose initial work commenced back in the year 2000. This project would be an added tourism attraction.

In closing, I am will leave you with a summary of the CTUSAB's agenda, of which the focal points are:

- A Public Sector Wages and Salaries and Conditions of Service Agreement (2012-2014)
- A national minimum wage
- The promotion of training and retraining
- The retention of employment and the creation of new job opportunities
- New Labour Legislation,
- Appointments and Promotions in the Public Service, and
- The establishment of a Protective Services Commission and a Teaching Services Commission.

Delivered by:  
**DENNIS DE PEIZA**  
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