

Week of Excellence 2009
Closing Remarks by Dennis de Peiza, General Secretary – CTUSAB
Workshop: “Worker Participation and Workplace Flexibility:
What Research in Barbados has Revealed”
Tuesday 24 February 2009, Solidarity House

I believe that I can safely conclude that we have had an enlightening and provocative session today, and moreover, one that was fuelled and energized by a quality presentation from Dr Lawrence Nurse. Today's discussion on Workplace Flexibility is of immense national significance, in the context that it has emerged as a feature of globalization which now characterises workplaces.

It is important that we continue to address this issue of workplace flexibility, inasmuch as it has the potential to change the culture of the workplace. Following on this, I go further to suggest that it is inevitable to conclude that workplace changes demand the introduction of new standards.

Coming out of today's workshop, we are challenged to concentrate our efforts on building standards if flexibility is to be embraced in the competitive workplace, and to do so for the purpose of ensuring that workers share fairly in the benefits of economic prosperity. This is not a

phenomenon that will easily escape the attention of trade unions, for labour is consciousness that there is a serious downside to the introduction of workplace flexibility. In speaking to this, we identify and address two major short comings, namely, job security and income equality.

The consequential features of these are the creation of low paying jobs and a widening group of part-time and casual labour. Coming out of his research on worker participation and worker flexibility, Dr Nurse has, in his made us aware of the trends identified in *Atypical Working*. He specifically related to part-time, temporary casual and weekend work. He pointed out that benefits accrued to those who were employed in *Atypical* contracts, were lower than those accorded persons who worked under fixed contracts.

Amongst the other important observations he made were that worker participation is associated with promoting workplace efficiency, innovative militance, and social partnership dialogue. He emphasized that the involvement of worker participation in the worker flexibility could lead to higher levels of job satisfaction, increase joint benefits and reduce absenteeism.

Dr. Nurse underscored the point that there is a place for union involvement under workplace flexibility, and identified collective bargaining and social dialogue as the means of worker participation for shaping and managing flexible work. He stressed the importance of engaging these approaches, by emphasising that there were higher levels of stability in temporary contracts, where collective bargaining agreement were in place.

I remind you of the position which he advanced at the start of his presentation, that flexibility as an option in the workplace has to be exercised by way of consultation and collaboration; as both parties, management and workers have a vested interest in workplace flexibility.

Madam Chair, on behalf of the Organising Committee of the 2009 Week of Excellence Committee, and the participants of today's Workshop, I express thanks to Dr Lawrence Nurse, Senator Sir Roy Trotman, Mr Harcourt Husbands and Comrade Robert 'Bobby' Morris for their individual contribution to today's session.

Madam Chair, you are to be complimented for having so ably presided over the session.

Finally, Madam Chair, as we leave this session, let us go with the understanding that trade unions will sustain their efforts to minimize any potential disadvantages workplace flexibility could impose on workers. Rest assured that Labour will not lose sight of the fact that under workplace flexibility, work has become more intense, with both full and part-time workers having increased workloads. Labour will also remain mindful that accompanying the widening of the pool of casual workers, is the denial of basic rights, such as, sick leave and holiday with pay to employees. Further, that these casuals will not enjoy overtime pay and stand to be denied benefits from traditional pay an profit sharing schemes. I take this opportunity to advise employers who are contemplating new alternative

work arrangements, that as employers they ought to become responsive to the needs of employees. By adopting this approach, they could stimulate workers to work to their full potential and eliminate the exercise of the option by workers to leave the enterprise.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for participating in today's session, and here is hoping that you have an enjoyable lunch.

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