

ST.LUCIA CIVIL SERVICE ASSOCIATION

GENERAL COUNCIL MEETING MARCH 2011

GENERAL SECRETARY'S REPORT

A. INTRODUCTION

The General Secretary's Report is submitted to the meeting of 2nd March, 2011 of the General Council of the Saint Lucia Civil Service Association (CSA).

The report serves to update the General Council on the activities of the Secretariat and National Executive Committee (NEC) since the meeting of 8th December, 2011. The period covered by the report is 9th December, 2010 to February 2011.

The sections contained in the Report include: Industrial Relations (Collective Agreements, Grievances, Representation); Benefits, training and education, organizational and administrative issues.

B. INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

1. Collective Agreements

The period under review was not eventful for Collective Agreements. In most cases the CSA was expecting counter proposals and/or dates for the commencement of negotiations. These counter proposals were not forthcoming.

The employees where counter-proposals and/or dates for the commencement of negotiations were expected included: - NSDC (CSA contemplated sending the matter to the Office of the Labour Commissioner); SALCC, WASCO, GOSL (as indicated before, the government related agencies were awaiting the outcome of the GOSL negotiations).

In spite of the slow responses, counter-proposals and dates for the commencement of negotiations were received from CSCCU (to begin on January 25); LUCELEC (to begin on February 8) and the status of other were:

CBN made an interim offer of 2% which was rejected by employees; National Archives, fringe benefits were completed; Bel Jou Hotel promised a date by which to begin the negotiations within six (6) weeks.

On the other hand, the Secretariat was fairly successful in finalizing agreements with SLMB and RSL. After representation on behalf of SLMB employees, management agreed with the proposal from the Union to award a lump sum of \$500.00 in lieu of salary negotiations that were aborted.

It was indicated at the General Council of 8th December, 2010 that negotiations were completed with RSL for a lump sum of \$700.00 to cover years 1 and 2; and 2% to 5% increase depending on salary levels for year 3.

2. Grievances

(a) Representatives from the Secretariat held meetings with employees at the branches shown and followed up with management issues of grievances which arose: -

- Rehabilitation Centre/Turning Point: 18th January
- Saint Lucia Social Development Fund: 21st January

(b) Branches where issues of grievances were followed-up on behalf of members included: -

- Soufriere Hospital Laboratory
- Radio St.Lucia/outstanding travelling allowance/matter on the suspension of a member was taken to the Labour Commissioner, response awaited
- Saint Lucia Fish Marketing Corporation
- Ministry of Communication and Works/withholding payments for additional duties was successfully resolved
- Ministry of Health/salary underpayment

3. Representation

(a) Ministry of the Public Service (MOPS)

At the last regular meeting (for 2010) which was held with MOPS, it was indicated that the Ministry intended to "Review Saint Lucia's HRM Legal Framework". At the time of writing of this report, the Ministry announced the assignment of two (2) consultants to: -

- (i) Conduct a review of the human resource management legislation, policies and procedures in the Public Service;
- (ii) Prepare a summary of the roles and responsibilities of the Public Service Commission (PSC), MOPS and other agencies in human resources management in Saint Lucia;
- (iii) Prepare the Public Service Bill for Saint Lucia.

As a stakeholder, the CSA was invited to discuss the HRM legal framework in the Public Service (18th February). It is an initiative that holds implications for Public Sector employees, and the General Council will have to be engaged in discussions on the forward movement of this matter.

(b) Department of Environmental Health

The long struggle and level of representation provided to relocate the Department of Environmental Health came to an end in January (2011). Work on the Computer World Building at Bois d'Orange was completed and the building was to have been inspected for the relocation of the employees. It took a long time (in excess of 3 years) but persistence and support of the employees held sway.

(c) Price of Petrol

The Union made some representation on the price of petrol during the period. Correspondence was sent to draw the attention of the Permanent Secretary of Finance about the implications of the unabated increases in the price petrol to traveling and other Public Sector employees.

The Union called on the Ministry to place a "cap" on the price of petrol.

(d) Customs and Excise

The regular meeting with the Customs and Excise Department was held on 26th January. In addition to the current matters which needed follow-up, the CSA representatives sought to resolve a grievance on behalf of a member. The member was aggrieved because for having been given a director by word of mouth to undertake duties in a position higher than the substantive post without consideration for appointment/compensation.

(e) Ministry of Health

The regular meeting with the Ministry of Health was held on 3rd February. The matters dealt with at the meeting were largely current for which status was sought, on: -

(i) Conditions of Work at: -

- Rehabilitation Centre/Turning Point (propose relocation at the National Mental Wellness Centre);
- Relocation of Senior Citizens Home;
- Relocation of Environmental Health Department.

(ii) Individual Grievances

(f) Ministry of Agriculture

After a number of postponements, the inaugural regular/quarterly meeting with the Ministry of Agriculture was held (December 14, 2010). The concerns that were tabled for discussion included: -

(i) Matters relating to the Research Division: conditions of building; promotional opportunities/non compliance to provision of appraisals; parking for traveling officers; equipment and furniture.

It was indicated steps were being taken for the relocation of the Research Centre in Roseau.

(ii) Engineering/Water Resources: Unavailability of basic tools and equipment; lack of access to available vehicles; lack of staff appraisals;

It was agreed to pursue these and other concerns of the Unit.

C. BENEFITS

1. Group Medical Plan

At the last meeting of General Council, we reported on the efforts to transfer the Group Medical Plan to a new insurer. After the same General Council, members turned out en masse to receive the presentation from SAGICOR – the identified/selected insurer, with whom the NEC held discussions on three (3) occasions.

Subsequently, the race was on to complete the needed enrollment forms and deduction forms. The response of the members of the Plan who were enrolled with CLICO was impressive. At the time of writing of this report, a total of eight hundred and twelve (812) members had enrolled with SAGICOR.

A meeting was held (19th January) with the management of CLICO to discuss the final arrangements for the closing of the Plan. The Management agreed: -

- ❖ Members would have coverage until January 31;
- ❖ There were in excess of 550 outstanding claims;
- ❖ All efforts to be made to settle all outstanding claims by the second week of February;

Effective 31st December, 2010, the CSA was without the services of the Broker. There has been a lot of spill from some quarters about the role of the Broker and the efforts of the NEC in transferring the plan without much involvement. A determination has to be made at this General Council about whether or not a Broker is needed.

2. Housing Cooperative

The symposium on housing which was postponed due to the impact of Hurricane Tomas was held on: January 2 for shop stewards and on Thursday, January 3 for the general membership. Fifty-five (55) participants attended on January 2 and attended on January 3. The presentations by the financial institutions were well received. It seemed that for the plants to establish the Cooperative, the Credit Union and Financial Investment and Consultancy Services (FICS) are the institutions that will offer the better packages for members.

The activities to be pursued/follow-up include: -

- Housing Need Survey
- Rules and regulations of the Cooperative
- Education programme for members

Shop stewards of all branches have a very important role in the implementation of follow-up activities.

3. Other Benefits

In keeping with the efforts of the NEC to broaden and/or diversify benefits to members consideration is being given to the establishment of a group pension plan and a group vehicle insurance plan. As soon as the details are adequately conceptualized and information received from potential providers the General Council will be engaged; and shop stewards will have an important role to play in mobilizing members to enroll.

4. Building in the South

In an attempt to move the plans of the building in the South forward, the NEC received assistance of a member of the General Council. The site was visited on 15th December, 2010.

At the time of writing of this report, preliminary sketches were being finalized for discussion with the NEC.

D. TRAINING AND EDUCATION

The period under review was an awkward one for training and education. There was no training/education activity during the period.

E. ORGANISATIONAL/ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

1. Expenditure Committee

Two (2) meetings of the Expenditure Committee were attempted during the period.

2. Branch Meetings

Meetings were held with the following branches during the period: -

- Saint Lucia Social Development Fund (21st January)
- Civil Status Registry (27th January): Shop steward/Sandy Jean-Paul
- Home Affairs (3rd February)

3. Membership

At the end of December 2010, the total paying membership stood at 2623. We indicate paying, because a substantial number of 35 had registered as members for the month of January and from whom dues were not yet deducted.

4. Revised Constitution

As promised at the last General Council (of 8th December, 2010) the draft of the revised Constitution is tabled for the consideration of this meeting. Members are urged to closely consider what is proposed in the respective clauses so that we can move forward to the next stage.

If passed at this General Council, the next stage is expected to involve: -

- ❖ Review of the provisions by a legal “eye”
- ❖ Circulate for discussion in all branches
- ❖ Adoption by the general body

Shop stewards are expected to play a vital role at the discussion stage in the branches.

5. 60th Anniversary of the CSA

The attention of members of the General Council was drawn to 2011 as the 60th Anniversary of the CSA. The Committee which was formed to plan activities to

commemorate this milestone has not adequately worked. At the time of writing, nothing was in place to report on.

6. Hurricane Tomas

At the last General Council meeting we reported on the impact of Hurricane Tomas, the effect on some members, and what the NEC had proposed by way of assistance. Today an account of the assistance which was provided: -

- Names of persons affected were received from (11) branches
- A total of 21 names were received
- After follow-up on the requests 18 were accepted for assistance
- An additional 2 or 3 requests were received after the fact, and were not considered
- Of the 18 that were accepted for assistance: 11 received (\$500.0) each
7 received \$300.00 each.

If we do the arithmetic, a total of \$7,600.00 was spent in assistance to hurricane victims.

F. CONCLUSIONS

The activities/achievements of the Union, for the period under consideration, were a bit slow because of the season in question, and because of the situation in the aftermath of the hurricane. Some planned activities were cancelled/postponed.

Nevertheless, 2011 has begun and the Union perceives it to be an eventful year. Among other things, the year marks the 60th Anniversary of the registration as a Union. It is a milestone which the Union and its members will have to observe. A series of activities have been planned for this purpose. The success of these activities calls for the participation of the membership at all levels.

There are also some important initiatives which we have to see through in the anniversary year for which members involvement indecision making will be important. Two (2) of these initiatives stand out: the housing cooperative, and adoption of the revised Constitution.

There is need to urge members, through the General Council to do their utmost to assist the NEC as we move forward.