

A. INTRODUCTION

The General Secretary's Report is submitted to the meeting of the General Council of the St.Lucia Civil Service Association (CSA), on 22nd April, 2009.

The report serves to update the General Council on the activities of the CSA for the period April 2008 to February 2009. During that period three (3) Special General Council meetings and the Annual General Meeting (SGM) were held.

The Special General Council meetings were called to address specific issues relative to Work Plans and Budgets (for 2008 and 2009) and the Policy Document for the Operations of the Secretariat. Members of the General Council who were in receipt of and read the Report to the AGM should have no difficulty in relating to some of the issues contained in this report.

The issues contained in the report are organised into six (6) sections: The section on Industrial Relations updates the activities on negotiations and Collective Agreements, Union Recognition and grievances. Information on the areas of representation is provided; updates on the benefit schemes, training and organizational activities and administrative/staff issues are all provided in the report.

B. INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

1. Negotiations and Collective Agreements

Ten (10) negotiations and/or Collective Agreements were reported at the AGM to have been completed. An additional nine (9) were completed since the AGM. These included (salary benefits are shown):

- ✓ Government of St.Lucia (14.5% over 3 years; an additional \$500 lump sum to "non-established staff")
- ✓ Sir Arthur Lewis Community College (conditions same as the Government of St.Lucia)
- ✓ St.Lucia Tourist Board (15% over 3 years)
- ✓ National Skills Development Centre (conditions same as Government of St.Lucia)
- ✓ St.Lucia Bureau of Standards (14% over 3 years)
- ✓ Canadian Bank Notes of Lucia Inc.
- ✓ Poverty Reduction Fund/BNTF (14.5%)
- ✓ WASCO (6% over 1 year)

The Union has not been successful in negotiating terms and conditions/salary increase for the employees of the St.Lucia Marketing Board (SLMB). The agreement between CSA and the SLMB to negotiate salary increase for staff for January to December 2008 have not been pursued. A lump sum of \$500.00 was requested in December 2008 and that too have been proven difficult.

General Council meeting – 22nd April, 2009

During the period under review, Collective Agreements were signed with CCC, CBN St.Lucia Inc., WASCO, SLTB and Credit Union. Efforts were on the way to have other signed and the Secretariat expressed concern over the delay in signing the one with Government and SALCC.

At the time of writing of the report negotiations with St.Lucia Fish Marketing Corporation (SLFMC) was on-going and preparations were on the way for submission of proposals to NDC, SLASPA and RSL.

2. Union Recognition

The LUCELEC workers recognition became a prominent issue in the media. The CSA's response to the approaches by the workers for recognition has been as transparent as conditions would allow by: -

- Drawing the attention of the Seamen Union to the problem.
- Holding of a Seamen Union/CSA bilateral meeting on the matter.
- Facilitating the TUF's involvement at: -
 - TUF/CSA Seamen Union meeting
 - TUF meeting the aggrieved workers.

With the incessant approaches by the workers, the CSA applied for recognition. The poll that was scheduled for 5th November was surprisingly called-off on the day before because of a request from the AG's Office.

The Secretariat has its sights on other areas for recognition but it was not tactical to report on at this time.

3. Grievances

Many of the following areas of grievances were reported in the report to the AGM. (September 6, 2008):

- (i) The differences that surfaced between some Customs Officers and Comptroller about management issues were amicably settled after a meeting was held with the aggrieved officers and their concerns communicated to the Comptroller.
- (ii) The CSA assisted some Customs Officers who were concerned about their lack of promotion since they were assigned to a Special project. The matter was taken to the level of the Ministry of the Public Service.
- (iii) Customs Officers in Shed #6 were concerned about the implications of new security measures that were implemented by SLASPA. The CSA held discussions with the concerned officers and enabled a meeting with the authorities. Some resolutions were found to allay the concerns of the officers.
- (iv) Assistant Customs Officers in Vieux-Fort were aggrieved about their placement in a new structure/classification. After a meeting (October 9) with the Officers, the CSA assisted in resolving the matter to their satisfaction.

General Council meeting – 22nd April, 2009

- (v) The problems concerning the fork lifts and pigeon droppings at Shed #6 were not adequately resolved at the time of writing of this report.

(b) Castries City Council

The CSA was not successful with the assistance provided to a member at the CCC whose contract was not renewed. The Union upheld the view that the member was unfairly treated and that there were ulterior motives behind the non-renewal of the contract.

(c) Ministry of Communications, etc.

Road technicians at the Ministry of Communications, etc. were aggrieved after having worked overtime in excess of the stipulated 30 hours without compensation. The intervention of the CSA resulted in the granting of time-off in lieu of overtime.

(d) Soufriere Hospital

A member at the Soufriere Hospital who served as Senior Executive Officer in excess of 15 years became aggrieved when a Principal Nursing Officer was unceremoniously placed above her. The matter was taken to the Ministry of the Public Service for a resolution.

(e) Library Services

The deplorable working conditions of many librarians in various communities came to the fore at a meeting which was held with Library Assistants at the Central Library.

The conditions of tenure of the Library Assistants were also areas of concern.

The concerns of the Library Assistants were tabled at a meeting with the Ministry of the Public Service. Resolution of the problems was still under consideration.

(f) Registry of Companies

Health and Safety concerns, caused by dust and fungi, came to the fore at the Registry of Companies. Employees were advised to remain at home whilst the union sought to resolve the problems with the authorities. The conditions were finally bought to acceptable levels.

(g) Soufriere Regional Development Foundation (SRDF)

A member became aggrieved as a result of unfair disciplinary action that was effected by the management of SRDF. Other employees expressed willingness to come out in support.

General Council meeting – 22nd April, 2009

The intervention of the Labour Department was sought in the matter. After a conciliatory meeting, suspension for three months was reduced to one month.

(h) St.Lucia Banana Corporation (SLBC)

The issue which arose between SLBC and WIBDECO and its implications to employees and members of the CSA was well documented in the report to the AGM (6th September).

The fall-out was that some employees sought alternative employment and SLBC terminated others, leading to a substantial loss of membership from the CSA.

The CSA assisted the employees to get their terminal benefits.

(i) Golden Hope Hospital

The concerns over the deplorable working conditions at Golden Hope Hospital lingered beyond the status report to the AGM. The problems were attributable to the delays in completing the renovations works that were started many months before. Many meetings were held with the Ministry of Health on the matter. It is important to report however that the renovation works were completed thus providing some temporary reprieve to the situation. They have since been indications of bed bug re-infestation.

(j) Water and Sewerage Company (WASCO)

Three (3) workers at WASCO were assisted at disciplinary hearings which were held by management over concerns about their performance.

Resulting from the intervention of the CSA the job of one (1) worker was saved. The situation which faced the other two (2) could not have been defended.

The CSA was also able to put the hearing with another two (2) workers on hold indefinitely.

(k) Victoria Hospital

The CSA was successful in assisting the driver and attendant at the Blood Bank to resolve problems surrounding the payment of overtime which was overdue.

(l) Poverty Reduction Fund (PRF)/Basic Needs Trust Fund (BNTF)

There were concerns about conditions at offices where the PRF/BNTF were to be relocated.

After a number of meetings with employees and correspondence to management, a minimum set of conditions under which the relocation would have been accepted were presented. The set of minimum conditions required the intervention of the

Permanent Secretary with whom a meeting was held, and following which some areas of concern were addressed.

(m) Senior Citizens Home

Employees were in limbo as a result of the indecisions of where to relocate the Senior Citizens Home. At the same time conditions at the facility continued to deteriorate. The intervention of the CSA resulted in the required repairs. The matters regarding the relocation were still unresolved.

(n) Boys Training Center

At a meeting (31st October) called by the employees, the attention of the CSA was drawn to allegations of sexual abuse of wards at the Boys Training Center, and for which two (2) employees were suspended pending an investigation.

The employees were of the view that the allegations were casting a smear over all the staff and that the investigations should be expedited. The investigation was conducted and a report of its outcomes was awaited.

C. REPRESENTATION

The branches and/or concerns where representation was given on behalf of members included: WASCO, Ministry of the Public Service, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Justice. Some of the issues were already detailed in the report to the AGM.

(a) WASCO

The issue of concern to members and employees of WASCO was the privatisation. Resulting from representation made at a meeting (June 16, 2008) with the Minister of Public Utilities, Government Officials met with the workers. This was in keeping with a promise to consult/inform the public on the matter.

An attempt was made to hold such a consultation with members of the General Council. The effort ended in non-attendance.

The arrangements for the new company did not meet the schedule for December 2008. The transition is now expected sometime in 2009.

(b) Ministry of the Public Service

The CSA made representation on individual grievances of members from: -

- Soufriere Hospital

General Council meeting – 22nd April, 2009

- Division of Human Services
- Ministry of Justice
- High District Court
- Ministry of Home Affairs

On other issues of a general nature, the Ministry of the Public Service indicated the decisions were taken and actions would be initiated to: -

- ❖ Source funds to undertake the re-classification which was proposed;
- ❖ Review of the 55 years for compulsory retirement from the service;
- ❖ Resume work on the Public Service Act.

(c) Ministry of Health

Regular meetings were started with the Ministry of Health during the period. The outstanding matters which were tabled at the first meeting, included: -

- Upton Gardens Girls Center – salaries and back-pay, reclassification
- Matters pertaining to Victoria Hospital
- Matters pertaining to Senior Citizens Home
- Division of Human Services – Regularization of structure, office space and security issues.
- Environmental Health – Office space (V/F), relocation (Castries)
- Golden Hope Hospital – Working Conditions resurfaced as an issue

Ministry of Justice

Regular meetings were also started with the Ministry of Justice. Matters discussed were: -

D. MEMBERS' BENEFITS AND SERVICES

1. Group medical Plan

The improvements in the settlement of claims which were reported in the Report to the AGM still holds. The NEC however took steps in the attempt to remove knicks in the administration of the plan.

An output of these attempts was the agreement that the Broker meets with relevant Secretariat personnel on a monthly basis to update on the operations of the Plan.

2. ID Cards

General Council meeting – 22nd April, 2009

The issuing of ID cards to members were resumed after a long delay. The issuing of ID cards became possible again after arrangements were finalized with the Electoral Department for their preparation.

Newly registered members and members who had not received ID cards since the equipment at Inland Revenue Department broke down are being provided.

3. Scholarships

The members whose children were beneficiaries of CSA's scholarships in 2008 were as follows: -

Humbert Cox	-	Customs and Excise Department
Brenda Jn.Baptiste	-	Victoria Hospital
Fulgence St.Prix	-	St.Lucia Bureau of Standards
Marcia Norbal	-	Ministry of Communications, etc.
Monica Williams	-	Ministry of Health Wellness, etc.

In addition, five (5) children of members were awarded special assistance valued at \$300.00 per child. The parents of the awardees were: -

St.John Antal	-	Forestry Department
Angel St.Hill	-	Soufriere Regional Development Foundation
Brenda Jules	-	Sir Arthur Lewis Community College
Dan Stephen	-	Victoria Hospital
Gilbert Charlery	-	Sir Arthur Lewis Community College

E. ORGANISATIONAL ISSUES

(a) Branch meetings

In the period November 3 – November 27, 2008 a series of branch meetings were held. A total of 34 branches (more or less) were visited. Matters discussed at the meetings were: -

- CSA Week 2008
- Feedback from meeting with the Ministry of the Public Service
 - Reclassification
 - Pensions issue
 - Public service regulations
- Attitude of members towards work (timeliness, professionalism, efficiency)
- Conclusion of negotiations
- Branch issues

Generally, members expressed satisfaction about the finalization of negotiations and the terms of salary increases that were arrived at. The wish was also expressed for more frequent meetings at the branches.

General Council meeting – 22nd April, 2009

(b) Annual General Meeting

The AGM was held, as planned, on 6th September, 2008. Eighty-eight (88) members attended the event. An important highlight of the proceedings were the resolution to increase membership dues from \$20.00 to \$25.00 per month; and the motion to increase the value of CSA’s Scholarship to: **\$1,000.00 for Forms 1-2; \$1,500.00 for Forms 3-4; \$1,000.00 for Form 5.**

(c) NEC Retreat

A retreat of the National Executive Committee was held on September 26, 2008. The event was a follow-up to an NEC/Staff Retreat which was held earlier in the year. The retreat was aimed at assisting members to “iron out” differences and to better fulfill their role as NEC members. The meeting was inconclusive and the follow-up which was planned for 2nd October did not take place.

(d) Training and Education

As part of the activities to mark CSA Week 2008, a workshop for Shop Stewards was held on 25th November, 2008. The theme for the workshop was “Know your Contract – Know your Rights” and focus was placed on the Staff Orders and Collective Agreements. Forty-five (45) participants benefited.

Other members and staff who benefited from training in the review period were: -

(a) Secretariat staff: Brenda Dayes and Sharleen Peter, Accounting Officer and Assistant Accounting Officer, respectively, who were trained in “Quickbooks” programme. The training was sponsored by CSA and executed by the NRDF.

(b)

NAME	SPONSOR	DATE	VENUE	TOPIC
Emmanuel Alfred	PSI	13-17 October, 2008	Barbados	Young Workers Seminar
Yvonne Edwin	UNI	1-14 November, 2008	Trinidad	Organizing Young Workers to Defend Decent Work
Dwight Joseph	PSI/FES	2-5 December, 2008	Grenada	Strategic Research for organizing, campaigning and organizing
Joseph Dosserie Matthew Francis Malcolm Philips Ken Goodman Cecil Simon	PSI	20 November, 2008	St.Lucia	Impact of Water Privatisation
10 others	PSI	20 November, 2008	St.Lucia	Same as above

(e) CSA Week

CSA Week 2008 was held under the theme: “Revitalising through capacity building” from November 23 – 29, 2008. The activities for the week came off with mixed results. For example, the shop stewards workshop, the domino competition and the branch meetings were highly successful. The same cannot be said for the official opening and the dance because of poor participation.

F. ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUE

1. NWU/NEC Negotiations

The most salient of the administrative issues for the period was the negotiations between the National Workers Union (NWU), the Union which represents staff, and the NEC for working conditions and increases in salary. The matter of increases in salary has not proceeded in a cordial manner and was the basis for a one (1) day sick out by staff.

The matter was referred to the Special General Council meeting of 11th February, 2009 for consideration. A delegation of four (4) General Council members were selected to join the National Executive Committee (NEC) Negotiating Team in an effort to bring matters back to normalcy.

G. CONCLUSION

The General Council meeting of March 11, 2009 was the first of the regular General Council meetings held since the one of April 2008. The period was punctuated by a series of Special General Council meetings which were called to address specific issues. During the period, also, the AGM 2008 was held. Many aspects of this report referred to activities over a short time period. Salient among these activities were the negotiations which were completed. The CSA was fairly successful in arriving at reasonable settlements given the financial situations with which some of the employees were faced.

The regular meetings with the Ministry of the Public Service are serving a useful framework to address the grievances of members. The Ministries of Justice and Health agreed to establish a similar framework in the quests to resolve issues.

2009 will become an interesting and eventful year for the CSA. It is a year for the Biennial Convention. The Work Plan and Budget for the year were approved at the Special General Council meeting of 11th February, 2009. A conscious effort is needed by all concerned at all levels. Secretariat, NEC, Shop Stewards/General Council for the successful implementation of the provisions of the Work Plan.