

1. **INTRODUCTION**

The 11th Biennial Convention of the St.Lucia Civil Service Association (CSA) is being held at a time of much adjustment. There are on-going adjustments internationally which are forcing governments and employers of the region to institute measures in their quest for economic survival. The negative impact of these measures on employees, at all levels, and their representative organizations are further compounded by unprecedented increases in fuel prices and trade policies which are proving to be disadvantageous. For example, the governments of the region are contemplating measures like the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME), Corporatization or Statutorisation, whilst employers in the private sector have been closing shop or are restructuring.

In St.Lucia such policy measures and/or strategies have been manifested in various ways. The corporatization of the Water and Sewerage Company Incorporated (WASCO) has become a reality. There are moves to statutorize the Public Health institutions to include Victoria Hospital, Golden Hope Hospital and the Turning Point Rehabilitation Centre. Moves are also a foot to establish a Revenue Authority which will integrate the Customs and Excise and the Inland Revenue Departments. There is also talk to privatize the postal services.

The policies and measures of adjustments are manifested on income levels. It was observed that for “ten (10) years there has not been a substantial increase in wages in the Public Sector”. To curtail increases of the wage bill, employers have adopted lump sum payments across-the-board in negotiated agreements. The curtailment in spending is having its effects on occupational hazards. Poor working conditions with the resultant effect on health and safety are looming large.

To cap it all, the rights, benefits and gains which the trade unions have fought for, and which have traditionally been enjoyed by employees, are being eroded. Of these, the Marriage Gratuity for civil servants is no more. The tuition refund scheme was disbanded. Effective January 1, 2003, new entrants in the Public Service would not enjoy the traditional gratuities and pensions. The payment of NIS became the norm.

The combined effects of world forces and the responses of employers regionally and nationally are threatening to dissipate the forces and strength of the Unions. Organizationally, they threaten the survival of the Unions and challenge their role in civil society. This is brought about because the responses of the rank-and-file membership to lowering wages and pay-cuts, redundancies and job losses, rising prices and lowering standards of living, is that of disgruntlement, lost of confidence in their organizations and the withdrawal of membership. With this kind of stance and outlook from the members, should the Union(s) die a natural death? No! The correct stance or response of the Union(s) is to re-double our efforts in the industrial relations front; provide leadership and representation as never happened before; foster and strengthen the operational aspects relative to the interface between the Union(s) and its members.

An attempt is made in the following sections of the report to present the achievements of the CSA as a measure of the responses to the threats and challenges.

- Section #2 outlines the efforts of the Association in Industrial Relations. In this section, the status of activities on negotiating collective agreements is given. In this section also, an account is given of the problems of working conditions and occupational hazards which were experienced by members. The mounting number of grievances which the Association helped to resolve on behalf of affected members were reported in that Section.
- Section #3 of the Report deals with issues and/or areas of representation and provided an indication of the numerous committees and/or mechanisms on which representatives of the Association, or areas where representation had to be made to assure that the benefits and interests of the membership were taken into account.
- Section #4 provides a summary of the benefit schemes which were established, maintained and serviced by the Association.
- Sections #5 provides an indication of the education and training activities from which officials and members of the Association benefited and were involved.
 - Section #6 of the Report deals with organizational of the Association over the reporting period.
 - Section #7 provides the conclusions to the report.

Whilst the information in the Report covers the period since the 10th Biennial Convention, its contents serve as an update to the Report of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) held on September 11, 2004. For completeness and emphasis, some aspects of the Report of the AGM may be repeated here.

2. INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

2.1 Status of Collective Agreements

For the purposes of the Report, the status of Collective Agreements were categorized as agreements which were signed during the reporting period, agreements which were negotiated and were to be signed and proposals which were prepared and submitted for negotiations.

2.1.1 *Agreements signed*

A total of eight (8) collective agreements were signed in the review period. It could be observed that the salary increases which were awarded have not been substantial. A situation which can be said to have been predicated by the prevailing economic environment of the country.

It must also be noted that the icon of lump sum payments have crept in the menu. Lump sum payments in the award of salary increases provide monies in the pockets of employees, but do nothing to the base salaries. There are no shifts in the salaries and in the final analysis, incomes remain low.

BRANCH	PERIOD OF AGREEMENT	INCREASES AWARDED
Sir Arthur Lewis Community College	April 2003 – March 2007	\$950.00 lump sum * 10% (3%,3% and 4%)
Lewis Industries Limited	August 2003 – July 2006	3% (0%,1% and 2%)
Water and Sewerage Company Incorporated	January 2001 – December 2004	6% overall
Castries City Council	April 2004 – March 2007	Grades 1-6: 1%,2%,3% Grades 7-10: 1%,3%, 3%
National Conservation Authority	April 2004 – March 2007	\$850.00 lump sum * 6% (3%,3%)
St.Lucia Bureau of Standards	January 2000 – December 2005	18% (5%,4%,3% and 3%)
St.Lucia Civil Service Cooperative Credit Union	January 2002 – December 2004	
National Skills Development Centre	January 2003 – December 2004	\$850 lump sum * 3%

2.1.2 *Agreements/Negotiations to be completed*

(a)	Organization:	St.Lucia Fish Marketing Corporation
	Period:	September 1, 2003 – 31 August, 2005
	Status of Negotiations:	Completed, Award implemented. Await Signing.

- (b) **Organization:** **St.Lucia Air and Sea Ports Authority**
Period: April 2003 – March 2006
Status of Negotiations: Completed. 5% awarded; Await signing.
- (c) **Organization:** **St.Lucia Banana Corporation**
Period: January 1, 1999 – 31 December, 2005
Status of Negotiations: Award being negotiated.
- (d) **Organization:** **Soufriere Regional Development Foundation**
Period: January 2004 – December 2006
Status of Negotiations: Counter proposals submitted
- (e) **Organization:** **Radio St.Lucia Company Limited**
Period: April 1, 2000 – March 31, 2003
Status of Negotiations: Negotiations. Not resumed.
- (f) **Organization:** **St.Lucia Marketing Board**
Period: January 2005 – December 2007
Status of Negotiations: To be signed. Little progress
- (g) **Organization:** **St.Lucia Tourist Board**
Period: January 2006 – December 2008
Status of Negotiations: To be signed. Little progress.

2.1.3 *Proposals to be prepared/submitted*

BRANCHES	PERIOD	ACTION
Government of St.Lucia	April 2004 – March 2007	Draft prepared for submission.
National Skills Development Centre	April 2004 – March 2007	Feedback from Branch awaited.
St.Lucia Civil Service Cooperative Credit Union	January 2005 – December 2007	Proposal submitted.
Water and Sewerage Company Incorporated	January 2005 – December 2007	Proposals not prepared.
Poverty Reduction Fund	December 2004 – November 2007	Deadline to commence negotiations given.
National Archives Authority	April 2004 – March 2007	Submitted (March 7, 2005)

2.2 **Occupational Hazards**

Poor and/or deplorable working conditions fast became occupational hazards in many branches by an extent which warranted the intervention of the Association.

There were issues of defective washing machines and processors at the Golden Hope Hospital and at Victoria Hospital. The inflow of water and the drenching of offices by rain was however more phenomenal, not only at the Golden Hope Hospital but also in areas like the Central Library, Customs Building and the Ministry of Commerce. The situation at the Ministry of Commerce warranted strike action before the matter was rectified. Affected employees at the Customs building had to be sent home for a half day whilst the Association deliberated and arrived at a schedule of actions to be undertaken and which will eventually include relocation to renovated premises.

The problem of water was also compounded by problems of inadequate space and paucity of facilities and furniture. Such occupational hazards were evident at the Immigration Department where the civil staff was affected. The intervention of the Association led to the relocation of that Department.

The Association had to intervene in situations which contributed to health hazards arising out of the contamination of the work environment. Health hazards brought about by the caving in of a ceiling containing asbestos at the St.Lucia Tourist Board. The matter was rectified through repairs which were made to the roof and ceiling.

The health of the employees at the Civil Status Registry continued to be threatened by dust and fungus infestation on the record books which are handled on a day-to-day basis. The itches and coughs which became unbearable on Friday, June 10, 2005 led to the intervention of the Association. Measures undertaken were closure to the public on that Friday and on Monday and Tuesday of the following week. During the closures, steps were undertaken to clean the books together with a decisions to have persons employed, to continuously clean the books on a day-to-day basis. The added measures which were arrived at with management were to engage CEHI to conduct analyses with a view of arriving at permanent solutions to the problem. Affected employers were to undergo free health check-ups at their own volition.

It is important to note that the common denominator in the resolution of the problems of health hazards was the intervention of the Association. The intervention of the Association either resulted in work stoppages or for management to fork out the needed monies to carry out the needed repairs.

2.3 **Grievances**

The involvement of the Association in assisting members to resolve grievances was an area of industrial relations which occupied the time and energies of the Secretariat. The issues were varied. They included matters of restructuring and concerns about staff structure; there were concerns about promotions and appointments; there were issues relating to disciplinary actions and dismissals and redundancies; there were problems relating to payments for retirements, acting appointments, re-installment of salary after leave without pay; and a host of others. (like overtime)

The branches where these related grievances were addressed on behalf of affected or concerned members were: -

- ❖ **Soufriere Regional Development Foundation**
- ❖ **Electoral Department**
- ❖ **Upton Gardens Girls Centre**
- ❖ **Inland Revenue Department**
- ❖ **Sir Arthur Lewis Community College**
- ❖ **Castries City Council**
- ❖ **National Conservation Authority**
- ❖ **Ministry of Education, etc.**
- ❖ **Ministry of Health, etc.**
- ❖ **Government Information Service**
- ❖ **St.Lucia Air and Sea Ports Authority**
- ❖ **St.Lucia Bureau of Standards**
- ❖ **Victoria Hospital**
- ❖ **Golden Hope Hospital**

It is important to report that the assistance provided by the Association enabled the successful resolution of some of the grievances in favour of the aggrieved members. Some others were more difficult to resolve and the Association had to resort in taking the matter to the Labour Commissioner. There were a few cases when the affected members had to loose their jobs.

National Conservation Authority

In the case of the National Conservation Authority (NCA) it is important to report on the chronology of events. When it was reported in the media that the report on the investigations of the NCA was out, there was one media house which contacted the CSA for its response to the recommendation to sever all staff at the Authority. In response the General Secretary indicated that the CSA, and far less the National Executive, had not seen and read the Report and was therefore not in a position to indicate a response. It was pointed out, however the raison d'entre for the existence of the CSA was to represent its members and would therefore represent the staff at the NCA with respect to the recommendation to sever them.

After having down loaded the report from the internet and having become acquainted with its recommendations, the CSA, by letter dated April 27, 2005, to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Social Transformation, Culture and Local Government, expressed its concern about the recommendation "which advocated that all the employees at the NCA's head office were to be severed." It was also indicated that the Association was of the view that this was unacceptable and that the matter should be discussed. A meeting between the Association and the Interim Board of the NCA was proposed. The letter was copied to, and invited, the Office of the Labour Commissioner to be present at the discussions. By letter dated April 29, 2005, the Chairperson of the Interim Board responded and agreed to engage the CSA in "initial discussions". The meeting was held on May 3, 2005.

It was indicated at the meeting that the Interim Board had taken the CSA's concern into account and had agreed to restructure the NCA to improve operational and cost effectiveness, and as a result of which some positions would have to be made redundant. The CSA's

representatives at the meeting advanced that they were in disagreement to what was being proposed and could not have discussed the issue without a proposal on the restructuring. After some discussions, the meeting agreed as follows: -

- (a) A proposal on the restructuring of the NCA would be prepared by the Interim Board and would be provided to the CSA for discussion;
- (b) The CSA in conjunction with the Interim Board would be given the opportunity to discuss the proposal with NCA staff.

On the afternoon of May 10, 2005, at 3:00 pm, the Association received a letter dated May 10, 2005 which indicated as follows: -

“Pursuant to our meeting of May 3, 2005 between the Civil Service Association and the National Conservation Authority (NCA) Interim Board, please find attached as agreed the restructuring proposal for the NCA.”

“The Interim Board would welcome any comments on the proposal.”

On the morning of May 11, 2005, the Association received information which indicated that five (5) employees at the NCA Head Office had received letters of redundancy. On the same day (May 11, 2005), a letter of objection and protest was sent to the Chairman of the Interim Board. It protested the high-handed approach which the Board had taken in restructuring the NCA and in the redundancies which were effected. Considering that the Interim Board had reneged on the procedure which was agreed at the meeting of May 31, 2005, the CSA called for the following: -

- Withdrawal of the letters of redundancy;
- withdrawal of the letter dated May 10, 2005 in which it was intimated that there was agreement;
- Opportunity to be given to discuss the matter.

On the afternoon of May 11, 2005, a meeting was held with the staff at the head office of the NCA. In attendance were four (4) of the members who received redundancy letters, including others who were not made redundant. The actions which were taken by the CSA to represent the employees were discussed. An attempt was made to assess the support, if any, which existed between the redundant employees and the rest. It was obvious by the admittance of the redundant workers that there was division among them.

When the response to the CSA's letter of May 11, 2005 was not forth coming, the Association solicited the assistance of the Labour Commissioner (letter dated May 19, 2005) to intervene in the matter. By telephone conversation, the Labour Officer assigned to the CSA indicated that discussions were held with the Chairman of the Interim Board. The CSA received a letter dated May 19, 2005 in which the position of the Interim Board was outlined and the intimation that there was agreement was retracted. At the time of writing this report, the matter was still being pursued.

3. (a) **REPRESENTATION**

3.1 **Central Government**

During the reporting period there were matters which were on-going and others which emerged from the Central Government where representation by the Association was required. Of greater importance were the matters on the review of Grades 1 -5, increments and the "Statutorization" or "Corporatization" of some public services.

3.1.1 *Review of Grades 1 – 5*

The representation provided by the Association on the matter of the review of Grades 1-5 were in the exchange of letters with the Prime Minister. This culminated with a meeting on Friday, May 27, 2005. This meeting was called to discuss and finalize the terms of reference for the review.

The terms of reference provided for: -

(a) The formation of "a Joint Committee comprising representatives of Government and Public Sector Unions would be established to review wages/salaries of Grades 1 to 5, prior to the start of the next round of negotiations".

(b) The Joint Committee shall: -

Review of salaries of public officers in Grades 1 to 5 to determine whether: -

(i) any anomaly exists in the parity of salaries between positions in Grades 1 to 5 and positions in Grades 6 to 18;

(ii) the level of salaries paid to persons employed in Grades 1 to 5 is justifiable bearing in mind: -

- the qualifications established for the posts; and
- the duties assigned

(iii) the parties agree that the exercise can be carried out concurrently with on-going negotiations but that any recommendations for salaries for grades 1 to 5 will be taken into consideration at the point of finalizing the wage negotiations;

(iv) submit recommendations to the Minister of Finance for onward transmission to Cabinet

(c) The Joint Committee has the power to co-opt any person/institution relevant to its mandate.

(d) The Joint Committee is expected to complete its review over a period not exceeding five (5) months.

Given the time frame involved there is need to fuel the Prime Minister to expedite the establishment of the Joint Committee. A deadline should be given for the Committee to begin its work.

3.1.2 *Increments*

The issue regarding the payment of increments did not progress beyond the exchange of letters between the Minister of Finance and the Association. The matter was also discussed at a meeting which was held between the parties on May 27, 2005.

From the letters (March 11, 2005 from the Minister of Finance) it was suggested that the "CSA puts its proposals in writing to enable evaluation and to facilitate discussion on the resumption of ...meetings".

In response to the suggestion for a proposal and in accordance with directives given to the National Executive by the General Council, the Association, by letter dated March 24, 2005, proposed as follows: -

- (a) That all persons who have qualified for increments for years 1998 and 1999 be paid by May 2005; that adequate provisions be made in this year's budget to facilitate such payments; and
- (b) The suspension on increments be lifted and reinstated from the year 2000.

After the passing of the Budget the Association, by letter dated May 12, 2005 requested to be informed about the status of the proposals which were made.

3.1.3 *Statutorization*

An indication was given in the Report of the Annual General Meeting of September 11, 2004, of the policies and plans of the Government to statutorize/corporatize/commercialize the Public Health Services, Post Office Services and Revenue Collection Agencies.

The CSA from its perch as a representative body and as a partner in civil society holds interests in the changes that are envisaged and planned because of the implications of such changes to its members and society at large.

Experiences in other countries have shown that the policies and the implementation of plans to corporatize or privatize public services have resulted in job losses, lower incomes and reduced services to the mass of civil society, especially those who cannot afford the costs of such services.

(a) *Public Health Services*

The Association understood that the proposal to establish Universal Health Care (UHC), as a financial reform mechanism to allow citizens, regardless of ability to pay, equivalent access to a defined package of health services.

The interest and issue of concern of the CSA are the implications of the Statutorization of the Public Health Services for the tenure and benefits of employees. Such concerns were expressed in a document entitled "Statutorization of Public Health Institutions: Response of the CSA". This document was meant for discussion by the Steering Committee on which the CSA is represented by the 1st Vice President. Further, the CSA expressed reservations on the plans and policy to statutorize the Public Health services.

One of the positions advanced by the CSA in its response and to safeguard the interests of members was the need for a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). This should lay out the conditions and provisions which should obtain when employees change from the Public Service to the "New Management Entity". The draft MOU was made available for discussion. However, discussions on it and the circulation of the response document to Cabinet were put on hold to allow further consideration of CSA's position on statutorization and for dialogue with sister organizations (Nurses Association, Medical and Dental Association, Consumer Association, etc.)

A meeting on discussions with these representative bodies with the CSA was scheduled for June 23, 2005.

- (b) Revenue Authority and Commercialization of Post Services: There is little to report in addition to what was reported at the AGM (September 11, 2004) on the Revenue Authority and on the commercialization of the Postal Services. It is important to note however, that the CSA was in receipt of the report: "St.Lucia Revenue Authority – Implementation Planning Report", which was prepared by consultants.

An important aspect of the "Detailed Implementation Plan" to mention here were the provisions: -

- (i) CSA Union leadership would need to be engaged prior to or as part of planned briefings, and;
- (ii) Meet with the CSA Union to review the mandate of St.Lucia Revenue Authority Implementation Team and the role of the Advisory Committee and the intention to engage in extensive consultation with the Union.

For the purposes of this Report, the CSA has not been contacted for the fulfillment of these tasks.

3.2 **Trade Union Federation**

The AGM (September 11, 2004) was apprised of the representation provided by the CSA on the formation of the Trade Union Federation (TUF). During the reporting period the CSA was represented at meetings which were convened to discuss the draft Constitution. The final draft is now available and it was being studied by the National Executive Committee at the time of writing of this report.

It was intended to launch the TUF over the period. This has been delayed awaiting the provision of funds which were promised by the Minister of Finance.

3.3 **Representation on Committees**

The general body is no doubt aware of the plethora of Committees, ad hoc or permanent, on-going or inactive, which exist in the scheme of Governments operations. A recent count revealed sixteen (16) of such Committees. (See Appendix 1)

An attempt was made to ensure that the CSA was represented on these Committees. Since it is impossible for members of the National Executive to provide the representation on all those committees, the assistance of the appropriate members was solicited to provide the needed representation. The list of persons who represented the CSA on the various Committees is provided in Appendix 1 of the Report.

The National Executive Committee wishes to thank members and persons who agreed to serve on the various committees, and wish to solicit their support when called to do so in the future.

4. **BENEFIT SCHEMES**

4.1 **CLICO Group Insurance Scheme**

During the period under review the Association signed a Contract with Minvielle and Chastenant Insurance Brokers Limited in December 2004. As a consequence of this arrangement the position of Insurance Coordinator had to be made redundant. The incumbent holder of the position was offered and accepted the redesigned post of Clerk effective June 1, 2005.

The Broker and his team have met with twenty-three (23) branches thus far discussing with members the benefits of the Insurance Plan, their concerns and seeking feedback on ways and means to improve upon the provisions of the plan.

The Plan has been renewed for an additional year June 2005 to May 2006 under the same terms and conditions as expiring. The Broker was not able this time around to secure improvements to the plan, as a result of the claim experience. The loss ratio is reflected as follows: -

PERIOD	PREMIUMS(\$)	CLAIMS(\$)	LOSS RATIO %
01.05.02 – 31.04.03	809,683.74	584,295.47	72
01.05.03-31.04.04	1,010,606.54	337,805.84	33
01.05.04-31.03.05	992,261.49	900,230.00	91
TOTAL	2,812,551.77	1,822,331.31	64.79

The Broker has stated “concerning the loss history this will be reviewed in greater detail, however, we must advise that we will be monitoring closely as it will have future implications on the premium”.

Following are the Broker's recommendations for improvement to the plan: -

(a) **Referrals for overseas treatment**

That the requirement for overseas treatment should be changed to one (1) referral from the attending doctor/specialist instead of the two (2) referrals which exist presently.

(b) **Specialist Consultation**

A member who visits a specialist for a disability in that specialist's area of specialty should be reimbursed for the second visit at the specialist fee under the plan.

(b) **Life Insurance**

Claims settled for death benefits should not be reduced by premiums unpaid for the balance of the policy year.

(c) **Maternity**

Pre-natal limits should be increased to \$600.00 as this would have not adverse implications for the plan and loss ratio.

(d) **Air Fare**

Adjusting the benefit to 80%-20% from the existing 60%-40%.

4.2 **Benefit Upgrade**

- Hospital daily room and board CARICOM: Increase to \$400.00
- Air fare limits increase to \$2,500.00
- Maternity limit should be amended as follows: -

Normal delivery	-	\$1,500.00
Caesarean section	-	unchanged

We await the outcome of discussions between our Broker and our Insurer CLICO on the above caption recommendations.

4.3 **Discount Scheme**

The Association has not been able to increase on the number of organizations with regards to our discount scheme arrangements; this is not to say that the CSA has not been pursuing the same. The business houses are slow in responding to our requests for their participation.

The CSA welcomes suggestions from members on the ways and means for improvement.

4.4 **Scholarship Awards**

Currently the CSA provides assistance to twenty-five (25) scholarship holders.

The cost of these awards to the Association per year is about eighteen thousand one hundred dollars (\$18,100.00). In addition to the five scholarships awarded in 2004 a special assistance award was given to nine members' children in the sum of two thousand seven hundred dollars (\$2,700.00). Total expenditure is \$27,797.16).

While the Secretariat receives end of term reports from some of the scholarship holders a significant number of awardees are not adhering to the provisions of the award. There may be need to review the existing scholarship policy guideline.

In the main from the reports received the scholarship holders are maintaining satisfactory results while some others are excelling.

5. **EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

During the period under review the CSA continued in its efforts to broaden the knowledge and sharpen the skills of officers and members through training and education. The opportunity was taken of overseas workshops and conferences at which representatives of CSA participated. Local training events also enabled the training of CSA members in areas related to trade unionism and related fields

5.1 **Overseas educational activities**

Officials of the CSA and members benefited from numerous educational activities which were sponsored by international organizations to which the Union is affiliated. There were a total of sixteen (16) educational events from July 2003 to May 2005. A total of seventeen (17) officials and/or members benefited through their attendance. (See details in Appendix II).

The educational activities were sponsored by organizations such as Union Network International (UNI), Public Service International (PSI), Caribbean Congress of Labour (CCL), Caribbean Public Service Association (CPSA) to name a few.

5.2 **Local Workshops**

One (1) local workshop was held in the period under review, on April 28 and 29, 2004. It dealt with HIV/AIDS in the workplace. Thirty (30) participants from twenty-seven (27) departments/branches were involved (Appendix III). Emanating from the workshop, a draft policy on HIV/AIDS was formulated (Appendix IV).

6. **ORGANISATIONAL ISSUES**

6.1 **Membership**

A total of seventy-one (71) persons became members of CSA in 2004. The total membership at March 31, 2005 was 2,408. Continuous effort is required at all levels to register new members into the CSA since 2408 still represent less than 50% of unionizable employees.

During the period under review some persons withdrew their membership. The number could not be determined. There were others who were threatening to withdraw.

6.2 **Branches**

The general membership of the CSA spreads across a total of seventy-nine (79) branches. This number is made up of fifty-seven (57) in the Central Civil Service and twenty-two (22) Statutory Boards. Up to now it is difficult to ascertain the percentage of members of each branch. There is need to derive this statistic and establish a data base of it.

During the period under review the CSA lost the right to represent some branches. These included St.Judes Hospital and the National Lotteries Authority.

In the same time period the CSA won the recognition as the bargaining agent for the employees of the Poverty Reduction Fund. At the time of writing of this Report attempts were being made to be recognized as the bargaining agent of the Beach Management employees of the National Conservation Authority.

6.3 **Shop Stewards**

The shop stewards continued to serve as the back bone of the organization and as link pins between the Secretariat and the branches. The effort should be made to develop the trade union consciousness of the shop stewards, develop their leadership skills and to prepare them to take up leadership positions in the CSA.

The CSA should not allow the leadership crisis of the society to fall the Union at this juncture in its development. For this reason continuous attention was placed on the election of shop stewards.

During the period, eight (8) new shop stewards were elected to branches as follows:-

BRANCH	SHOP STEWARDS
Civil Status Registry	Jan Joseph
Customs and Excise Department	Kosygin Frederick
Immigration Division	Cletus Weeks
Land Registry	Marlies Joseph
Soufriere Hospital	Damiana Alexander
Lewis Industries Limited	Noreen Kenson

St.Lucia Air and Sea Ports Authority (Vieux-Fort)	Zephyryn Samuel
Property Tax (Inland Revenue Department)	Karamii Clarke

6.4 **General Council meeting**

Since the AGM (September 11, 2004) three substantive General Council meetings were held, on November 17, 2004, February 16, 2005 and May 25, 2005. The average percentage attendance was sixty percent (60%). In fulfilling the mandate as a decision making body, the General Council meetings carried a number of motions to authorize the National Executive on the following: -

6.4.1 **The motions from the General Council meeting of November 17, 2004 were as follows: -**

- That the Association should seek legal advice or guidance as to whether or not the Labour Commissioner had acted improperly with respect to workers at the St.Judes Hospital having sought representation from another Union.
- That the decision of the National Executive to hire Mr. James Perineau as General Secretary.
- That the National Executive should meet with the staff of the Victoria Hospital on the implications of the Universal Health Care for the staff of that institution.
- That the existing members of the Health Sub-Committees, Mr. Parker Ragnanan, the representative of the Victoria Hospital and the representative of the Golden Hope Hospital meet with members of the Executive and a comprehensive report on the Universal Health Care and Statutorization be submitted to the General Council.

6.4.2 **The motions from the General Council meeting of February 16, 2005 were: -**

- o That Sister Lilia Auguste, then Acting General Secretary, should be paid her acting allowance and an additional bonus.
- o That a special general meeting be held to discuss amendments to the CSA's Constitution for changing the day for general meetings and Biennial Conventions of the Association to allow members to attend on religious grounds.
- o That the Ministry of Labour Relations, Public Service and Cooperatives should be written to for the re-activation of the Increments Committee; and
- o That all persons qualifying for increments for 1998 and 1999 should be paid.
- o That an additional loan of EC\$80,000 should be raised for the purchase of furnishings and equipment of the renovated CSA headquarters.

- That the National Executive should bring finality to the issue of Insurance Broker vis-à-vis Insurance Coordinator regarding the appointment of an Insurance Broker, while treating the Insurance Coordinator with respect, before the next General Council meeting.
- That a letter be sent to the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Health, etc. informing of the situation at the Golden Hope Hospital and the purchasing of a washing machine for the hospital.
- That a letter be sent to the St.Lucia Tourist Board informing of the CSA's dissatisfaction with the delay in undertaking work to rectify problems of working conditions there.

6.4.3 **The motions from the General Council meeting of May 25, 2005: -**

- That the Biennial Convention of the St.Lucia Civil Service Association ratifies the recommendation of the General Council to increase the membership application fee from five dollars (\$5.00) to twenty dollars (\$20.00).

6.5 **Standing Committees**

The Standing Committees to facilitate the various activities and to distribute the work load of the Association were seven (7) in number. They included: -

- | | | |
|--|---|------------|
| ○ Women's Committee | - | 17 members |
| ○ Fund Raising/Social Committee | - | 13 members |
| ○ Sports Committee | - | 10 members |
| ○ Youth Steering Committee | - | 16 members |
| ○ Education and Mobilization Committee | - | 9 members |
| ○ Finance and Investment Committee | - | 17 members |
| ○ Building and Management Committee | - | 13 members |

The Standing Committees did not function to the desired effect. Infrequency of meetings, lack of attendance of members, coupled with the apparently low level of commitment militated against their effectiveness and output.

6.6 **CSA Headquarters**

Needless to report that the CSA headquarters was renovated. The evidence is all around us and the improved comfort is being felt at all present at this Biennial Convention, by all who work in the improved offices downstairs and by many who patronize the facilities on a day-to-day basis.

The costs involved in the civil works and in the furnishings and equipment are reflected in the Treasurer's Report and will not be repeated here. The costs involved were from loan funds.

There is need to make proper use of the building to assure that the investment costs are recovered.

The location continues to be prime real estate, up-market and close to the centre of government activities. This means that there will be a demand to rent out the building for weddings, conferences, examinations, meetings, church gatherings, etc. The membership of the Association with its many Standing Committees ought to seek more ways and better use of the building. The buildings should be viewed as a hub through which more interaction among the membership can be brought about. We must therefore change the Building Management Committee to come up with innovative ways and activities to bring about this need for interaction.

6.7 **Secretariat**

6.7.01 *Restructuring*

It should not be too difficult to appreciate that with 2,408 members, spread across seventy-nine (79) branches, there is need for a Secretariat to appropriately and effectively respond to industrial relations issues and to management benefits.

For this reason the National Executive commissioned a review of the Secretariat which had led to a restructuring. This will probably give rise to a staff compliment with implications for increase cost of running the Secretariat.

6.7.2 *Staff Changes*

The staff changes which were brought about on the Secretariat during the period involved: the appointment of a new General Secretary; the appointment of Bro. David Demacque to the position took effect on April 1, 2005.

7. **CONCLUSION**

As can be seen from the foregoing many issues continue to occupy the attention of the CSA in its attempts to bring benefits to its members. The issues of collective agreement – the preparation of proposals and their negotiations – occupy a large chunk of the time available to the Secretariat.

A lot of time balancing and rationalization is required if the Secretariat is to respond to increasing demands for representation by its members as a result of grievances which surface on a day to day basis.

The degree to which the CSA can respond to the demands for services from its members largely depends on the readiness of the branches, the National Executive Committee and the Shop Stewards in particular, to meet the Secretariat half way. In other words, our readiness to take responsibility as leaders at both the National and at the branch levels. There is need for the National Executive and the Shop Stewards to inspire the rank-and-file membership.

This is important because the CSA like other Unions, is entering a period where its ability to represent and retain its membership will be tested. We refer here to the implications of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME), efforts of the Government of Saint Lucia to statutorize the Public Health services, and proposals to integrate the Customs and Excise and Inland Revenue Departments into a Revenue Authority.

Given these issues, the focus of the CSA should not only be on “bread and butter” issues but on the larger issues of saving or securing jobs, preventing the erosion of rights and gains.

The National Executive Committee and the Secretariat by themselves cannot do it without the required awareness and involvement of our members in all aspects of the Association’s undertakings.

As leaders of the CSA, at the National and branch levels we need instead to become more conscious of the threats, which if allowed to go unattended, will dissipate us as a Union and as a force.

2nd July, 2005