

ST.LUCIA CIVIL SERVICE ASSOCIATION

13th BIENNIAL CONVENTION

12th September, 2009

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The National Executive Committee (NEC) report to the 13th Biennial Convention of the St.Lucia Civil Service Association (CSA) covers the period from the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the 6th September, 2008 to 30th August, 2009. The report marks the end of the two (2) year term of the NEC that was elected by the 12th Biennial Convention of the 6th October, 2007.

The report serves as the appropriate framework for the outgoing NEC to account for the undertakings, achievements and short-comings for the period under consideration.

An account about the NEC's first half term was already presented at the AGM of 2008. The account on its second half term is based on the plan of activities contained in the Work Plan for 2009. It is for this reason that in presenting the report, an attempt was made to organize the information in accordance with the 2009 Work Plan.

The report is organised in six (6) sections: -

- Section # 2 provides an account on the achievements of planned activities in Industrial Relations for the review period. This section is inclusive of negotiations, grievance handlings and representation.
- Section # 3 reports on the undertakings and efforts at improving benefits for the membership.
- Section # 4 provides an account on the training and education activities for members, officials and employees of the Union.
- Section # 5 discusses the participatory activities that were undertaken.
- Section # 6 provides an account of the organization, management issues and mobilization and recruitment for the period.
- Section # 7 draws some conclusions about the report and work of the NEC for the period under consideration.

2.0 INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

2.1 Collective Agreements

During the review period, the CSA successfully negotiated eleven (11) Collective Agreements for salary increases and improved conditions with

eleven (11) employers. The employers involved, the percentage increase and duration of the agreements were as follows: -

| EMPLOYER | PERCENTAGE INCREASE (%) | DURATION OF AGREEMENT |
|---|--------------------------------|--|
| Government of St.Lucia (GOSL) | 14.5 | 3 years (April 2007 – March 2010) |
| Sir Arthur Lewis Community College (SALCC) | 14.5 | 3 years (April 2007 – March 2010) |
| National Skills Development Centre (NSDC) | 14.5 | 3 years (April 2007 – March 2010) |
| Water and Sewerage Company (WASCO) | 6 | 1 year (January – December, 2008) |
| CBN St.Lucia Inc. | 8.4 | 3 years (April 2007 – March 2010) |
| St.Lucia Tourist Board (SLTB) | 15 | 3 years (April 2008 – March 2011) |
| St.Lucia Fish Marketing Corporation (SLFMC) | \$400.00 and 9 | 4 years (September 2007 – August 2011) |
| National Archives Authority | 14.5 | 3 years (April 2007 – March 2010) |
| St.Lucia Bureau of Standards (SLBS) | 14 | 3 years (July 2008 – June 2011) |
| St.Lucia Air and Sea Ports Authority (SLASPA) | 10 | 3 years (April 2009 – March 2012) |
| Lewis Industries Limited | \$200.00 and 7% | |

The duration of the agreements ranged from 1 year (WASCO) to four (4) years (SLFMC) whilst most of the agreements were for three (3) year duration. In most cases, (four [4]), the percentage increases for the three (3) year duration was 14.5% (in keeping with the settlement with GOSL). The highest increase was 15% with the SLTB. The lowest percentage increase for the duration of three (3) years was 8.5% (CBN St.Lucia Inc.).

Considering the prevailing circumstances which informed the negotiations it would be correct to report that the CSA was fairly successful in getting reasonable increases in salaries for members.

A total of eight (8) agreements were signed in the period under review. Of these, two (2) (Castries City Council [CCC] and Credit Union) were left-overs from the 2007/2008 period and six (6) [NSDC; WASCO; CBN St.Lucia Inc.;

SLTB; SLFMC and National Archives Authority] were from the 2008/2009 period. The non-signing of the Collective Agreements with GOSL and SALCC remained a source of concern. Members were losing benefits to say the least.

At a time of writing of this report, negotiations were either on-going, or preparations to negotiate were on the way with: Lewis Industries Limited, National Development Corporation, St.Lucia Social Development Fund, Radio St.Lucia Company, Soufriere Regional Development Fund and the Water and Sewerage Company.

Attempts were made to monitor the implementation of agreed provisions and clauses. It was expected that shop stewards of the respective branches would have contributed in monitoring the implementation of the Collective Agreements. To a large extent the activity remained in the domain of the Industrial Relations Unit at the Secretariat.

An important aspect in the monitoring of the implementation of agreed provisions was the impasse which arose between the CSA/Unions of the Trade Union Federation (TUF) and the GOSL on the payment of the 7,5% increase in salaries for the 2009/2010 period.

The impasse came about when Government, at late notice, indicated its inability, because of budget constraints, to pay the 7.5% which was due and requested of the unions to consider 0% and to being negotiations for the 2010/2013 triennium.

2.2 Impasse with the Government of St.Lucia

Stemming from their understanding of the crushing effect of the global economic crisis on resource poor states like St.Lucia, the TUF unions did not hold fast to the demand for 7.5% and were not adverse to giving the Government a reprieve. But being cognizant of the effect of high prices on workers, the unions held the view that a portion of the 7.5% should be paid upfront and the rest later, and that the portion to be paid should have been arrived at between the unions and Government.

On that basis, the TUF unions countered the 0% which was advanced by Government with a 4.5% and the rest to be paid in 2010. Through its divisiveness, and encouraged by detractors of the TUF, Government proposed 3% in a “take it or leave it” manner. This offer was accepted by two unions (not in the TUF) that were called separately by the Prime Minister to discuss the matter. Shortly after acceptance by the two (2) unions, the Prime Minister, in an address to the nation, portrayed the TUF unions as being unconscionable, greedy and insensitive to the implications of the economic situation.

The matter was brought to the general body of the CSA at an Extra-Ordinary General meeting, held on 20th April, 2009.

Members were not averse to giving the Government a reprieve, but Government demonstrated a level of intransigent on the 3% which was offered. There was a deadlock.

At an Extra-Ordinary General Meeting of the CSA, held on 5th May, 2009 the members adopted the following to be transmitted to Government through the TUF: -

- *Effective 1st April, 2009, the Government owes 7.5% increase in salaries to public servants.*
- *The CSA was not convinced of the claim by Government of inability to pay all the 7.5% increase at this time, but given the implications of the international economic meltdown to sustained growth in St.Lucia, as a responsible section of Civil Society, the CSA adheres to the compromise for payment of a 4.5% as proposed by the TUF.*
- *The CSA deplores the unilateral decision by Government to allocate for the payment of 3% to the budget. This was disclosed by the Prime Minister at the meeting with the TUF on 4th May, 2009.*
- *Since no agreement has been reached between the TUF and Government on the apportioning of the 7,5%, the CSA still expects the increase of 7.5% to be reflected in the May salaries with the relevant back pay effective from the month of April (2009).*
- *The CSA meeting of 5th May, 2009 also agreed that a firm deadline be given to Government to satisfactorily resolve the matter. The membership will meet to consider appropriate action if there is failure to meet the deadline.*

In furthering the demonstration of divisiveness, the Government announced a series of meetings to meet (14th May) directly with employees of the various sectors in the Public Service to discuss the 3% offer. These meetings were unceremoniously postponed.

In the meantime, the deadline of 26th May for the Government to pay in the May salaries was drawing near. The anxiety and tension among workers and the public was mounting, and after meetings between the TUF unions and a technical team from the Ministry of Finance, the Government informed by letter dated 18th May to increase its offer to 3.5%. In an address to the nation, it was announced that the 3.5% would have been reflected in the May salaries. This was without the consent of the TUF unions.

The unions saw this unilateral act as a means of: -

- Appeasing the workers
- Discrediting the leadership of the respective TUF unions
- Causing divisiveness
- Driving a wedge between workers and their unions
- Rendering the collective bargaining process null and void

Workers and their unions became furious by that act.

The 26th May had arrived. A joint meeting of the CSA and the St.Lucia Teachers Union (SLTU) was held. The progress of the actions of the unions (especially SLTU and CSA) which accompanied the disruptions became spontaneous when meetings turned into sick outs, protest marches and “walks”.

The concerns over the actions of the unions became so widespread to precipitate the Church Council in attempts to mediate between the TUF unions and Government. Following a meeting (26th May) of the TUF unions the CSA provided its understanding of the position which was arrived at for subsequent transmission to Government: -

- (a) 4% to be paid in the June salaries and retroactive from April 2009;
- (b) .5% to be paid in six (6) months, ie. in December 2009 and made retroactive from April 2009;
- (c) 3% to be paid in April 2010 and made retroactive from April 2009.
- (d) That all retroactive payments should be made tax free;
- (e) The payments should be extended to workers represented by the CSA at: SALCC, NSDC, National Archives Authority, Electoral Department.
- (f) All Collective Agreements between GOSL and the TUF unions, should be signed by a date to be identified.
- (g) There is need for a commitment in writing from the employer that there will be no victimization and retrenchment of workers.

Apparently, representatives of the Church Council were not spirited enough to penetrate the intransigent armor of the Government. The workers who were out on protest were getting battle fatigue. At the Special General Meeting of the CSA, held on 2nd June, 2009 the following resolution was adopted transmission to Government.

Whereas: Seven point five percent (7.5%), representing the third tranche of the increase in salaries for the 2007/2010 triennium was due to civil servants;

And Whereas: As a compromise, the CSA had agreed to accept 4.5% now with the balance (3 %) to be paid in April 2010;

And Whereas: Government decided to impose a payment of 3.5% into the accounts of employees, an action which the membership of the CSA rejected;

And Whereas: The CSA understood the prevailing economic circumstances had decided to consider apportioning the payment of the 4.5%, as a further reprieve to government;

And Whereas: Government had taken an intransigent stance by not acceding to the request of members for an amicable settlement for the payment;

And Whereas: Government and Sir Arthur Lewis Community College did not satisfy the requirements of signing the Collective Agreements by 28th May, 2009.

Be it resolved: That the general membership of the CSA will take appropriate industrial action, effective Monday, 8th June, 2009 if there is no Government agreement on the following: -

- (i) Payment of .5% in the June (2009) salaries, retroactive April 2009;
- (ii) Payment of .5% in the September (2009) salaries, retroactive April 2009;
- (iii) Payment of 3% in the April 2010, retroactive April 2009;
- (iv) Extend the pay structure inclusive of 3.5% and (a), (b) and (c) to employees at Sir Arthur Lewis Community College, National Archives Authority of St.Lucia, National Skills Development Centre and the Electoral Department, effective in the June salaries
- (v) The collective agreements (Government and Sir Arthur Lewis Community College) should be signed by June 15, 2009.
- (vi) Commitment that there will be no victimization of workers.

It was this resolution and formal notice of intent by the CSA to take industrial action which propelled a team led by representatives of the St.Lucia Employers Federation to meditate in the impasse.

After long hour of talks on the 4th June, 2009, the following position was arrived at: -

- I. Acknowledgement of the 3.5% already honored by the Government effective May 2009 (retroactive April 2009);
- II. That 4.125% (ie. an additional .635%) be applied effective June 2009 (retroactive to April 2009);
- III. That the balance of the 7.5% wage and salary increase (3.375%) will be honored in April 2010 (retroactive to April 2009);
- IV. That government undertakes to sign all the Collective Agreements with the Public Section Unions by 31st July, 2009;
- V. That the St.Lucia Trade Union Federation accepts to apologise for any breaches of procedures during the impasse; and
- VI. That Government stated it does not have a policy of victimizing and as such will ensure that such a practice will not be instituted.

The Federation stated also that it was the understanding that the meeting decided that: -

- (a) Salaries of public servants who participated in SLTUF activities will not be affected.

- (b) That the days the public servants spent out on the SLTUF activities will not be counted as part of their leave.

2.3 Grievance Handling

During the period under review, the CSA assisted its members to resolve grievances. Grievances that were handled involved health and safety (working conditions) issues, personal grievances and others that was of a general nature.

2.3.1 Health and Safety

(a) Civil Status Registry

Notwithstanding the relocation of the Civil Status Registry, health and safety concerns continued. The CSA drew the attention of management/administration to problems which surfaced with the flooding of washrooms and the absence of emergency exits. The problems of the washrooms were resolved.

There were also concerns of an unprecedented nature with the interference of the Minister in the operations of the Registry. Officials of the CSA had to intervene on two (2) occasions because of confusion and conflicting messages which resulted from interference by the Minister of Justice.

(b) Golden Hope Hospital

As indicated in the report to the AGM (September 6, 2008), officials of the CSA were called by members at the Golden Hope Hospital to assist in addressing (or redressing) conditions at the institution that were best described as having been improper for human habitation. The conditions became so deplorable overtime, an Environmental Health Officer recommended that the institution should be closed down and the inmates relocated.

There was a lack of response from the authorities in the Ministry of Health to the calls of the CSA and National Workers Union for attention to redress the situation. The unions issues notices of intended industrial action under the Essential Services Act. This resulted in the intervention of the Minister of Labour and the formation of a committee to monitor the implementation of remedial works. These works took an inordinately long time to complete. The conditions have since been made a bit more habitable.

(c) Customs and Excise Department

1. Shed # 6 – Castries

The employees at Shed # 6 in Castries became increasingly concerned about smoke emissions from forklifts and pigeon droppings. Through the intervention of the CSA, two electrical forklifts were commissioned and a third was awaited.

The problem with pigeon droppings, have not been adequately resolved despite the period of cleaning/scrubbing undertaken by SLASPA. The situation needs to be closely monitored.

2. Seaport: Vieux-Fort

Customs and Excise Officers at the Vieux-Fort Docks complained about occupational health and safety problems. Excessive dust and heat became unbearable and the officers stage a sit-in to protest these conditions. Through the intervention of the CSA, some short term corrective measures were implemented. The conditions were being monitored in an effort to get a permanent solution to the problems.

(d) Library Services

Stemming from a meeting held with Library Assistants, CSA. Officials were sensitized to the poor and deplorable working conditions which existed at libraries in Mongouge, Monchy, Vieux-Fort.

The plight of Library Assistants in the respective libraries were tabled with the authorities and promises were made to allocate funds for their (libraries) repair. It would seem that, to date no such allocations were made.

(e) Registry of Companies

Members complained about exercise dust and fungi. The CSA advised them to remain at home whilst attempts were made to resolve the problem.

(f) Senior Citizens Home

Leaking roof and defective kitchen equipment posed serious hazard and discomfort to employees. The CSA initiated dialogue with the officials at the Ministry of Health on ways to resolve the problems.

After some delays, some minimum/temporary arrangements were affected.

The employees were also aggrieved about the uncertainty of the relocation of the institution which was proposed.

(g) Forestry Division

There were situations at the Forestry Division/Ministry of Agriculture, which threatened the health of employees. The toilets remained non-functional for a period. The discomfort precipitated the employees to stage three (3) days of industrial action (February 4, 5 and 6). The actions of the employees caused the authorities to repair the dys-functional toilets.

2.2.2 Personal Grievances

(a) Ministry of Home Affairs

Representatives of the CSA assisted the probation officers in addressing some long standing concerns in the Ministry of Home Affairs. The intervention of the Union resulted in a meeting (February 13, 2009) with the Permanent Secretary and Supervisory Personnel where follow-up actions were arrived at to address concerns (reclassification, signing of traveling claims, confrontation with the officer-in-charge, other management matters).

(b) Electoral Department

Representatives of the Union met with the Chief Elections Officer (February 27, 2009) on long standing issues and concerns viz: working conditions, related management issues (appraisals, meetings), retirement and gratuity.

On the matter of retirement and gratuity, management was advancing ways to deny the consideration for payment, notwithstanding a signed agreement between the CSA and the Electoral Department.

The CSA proposed that a Cabinet proposal be prepared by management to request funds for the payment. The matter is to be taken up with the Commission.

(c) Ministry of Social Transformation

- (i) A member who worked as a Community Development Officer on a temporary appointment was abruptly told that since 2001 she was receiving payments illegally. In effect, the temporary appointment ended in 2001 and the member continued receiving pay from the consolidated fund without authority. She runs the risk of being asked to refund government.
- (ii) The CSA sought to clarify the status of the Upton Gardens Girls Centre. A follow-up meeting to be held on the matter.
- (iii) The appointment of CDO's was addressed.

(d) Castries City Council

The CSA assisted three (3) members at the Castries City Council to resolve grievances: -

- i. A female Constable, who the CSA claimed was unfairly dismissed, was compensated to an amount in excess of \$40,000.00.
- ii. Another member, whose lieu leave was denied, was compensated after the intervention of the Union.
- iii. The CSA was unsuccessful in assisting to secure the renewal of contract of a member. The union was of the view that the member was unfairly treated and victimized.

(e) Ministry of Communications, etc.

Road Technicians at the Ministry of Communications, etc. became 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.

(f) Soufriere Hospital

A member at the Soufriere Hospital who served as Senior Executive Officer in excess of fifteen (15) years became aggrieved when a Principal Nursing Officer was unceremoniously placed to administer the operations of the hospital.

The CSA assisted in addressing and redressing the matter at the level of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of the Public Service.

(g) Soufriere Regional Development Foundation

The CSA assisted a member at the Soufriere Regional Development Foundation (SRDF) when disciplinary action was effected by management. The member was initially suspended for three (3) months. Other employees were of the view that the member was unfairly treated.

The CSA sought the intervention of the Labour Department in the matter. After a conciliatory meeting, the suspension of the member was reduced to one(1) month.

(h) WASCO

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

One (1) member was reprimanded and retained his job. The cases against the other two (2) could not have been defended and the members were dismissed.

Through the intervention of the CSA, disciplinary hearings called against another two (2) workers were put on hold indefinitely.

(i) CBN St.Lucia Inc.

The CSA assisted a member at the CBN St.Lucia Inc. in a disciplinary hearing which was called against him over work ethics. It was concluded that a time frame for improvement should be set during which the officer's areas of weakness would be reviewed.

(j) Human Services Division

A member who was relocated without the payment of relocation allowance was assisted and the allowance which was denied was paid.

(k) Sir Arthur Lewis Community College (SALCC)

- (i)** The CSA assisted a member to receive honorarium for duties performed and for which he was not paid.
- (ii)** The CSA was successful in acquiring an appointment for a member to the post of Technical Assistant.

(l) Basic Needs Trust Fund (BNTF)

The relevant members were assisted in acquiring new contracts.

2.4 REPRESENTATION

a) Boys Training Centre

At a meeting (31st October 2009) called by employees, the attention of the CSA was drawn to allegations of sexual abuse of wards at the Boys Training Centre. Two employees were suspended pending an investigation into the matter. The employees were of the view that the allegations had cast a smear over the staff and that the investigations ought to have been expedited.

The CSA acted on behalf of employees by expressing concern about the effect of the allegations and requested the promised investigations to be expedited.

The investigations were conducted and a report was commissioned. A summary of the report was presented at a meeting of 28th January, 2009. Employees were informed of the contents of the report on 29th January, 2009.

The concerns of the employees over the allegations were cleared. The two (2) who were suspended were re-instated.

b) St.Lucia Marketing Board (SLMB)

A long delay in finalizing the proposed restructuring of the St.Lucia Marketing Board had generated uncertainty at the management level and anxiety among staff. The negotiations that were intended for the 2008 period did not take place. All the approaches of the CSA for an increase in salaries for employees met with management's response of inability to pay and a threat of redundancies and the closing down of SLMB.

At a meeting held on 21st January, 2009, the CSA was able to get the management of SLMB and officials of the Ministry of Agriculture, etc. to discuss the fate of SLMB and the situation which faced the employees. The CSA was able to secure a lump sum payment of \$500.00 to employees. Management of SLMB/Ministry of Agriculture, etc. also indicated that as part of the restructuring, nine (9) employees were to be made redundant and agreed that the remaining employees would be given terms and conditions for their continued engagement through negotiations for a new Collective Agreement.

The status and future of the SLMB was still unclear at the time of writing of this report.

c) Water and Sewerage Company (WASCO)

The understanding of the arrangements and implications of the privatization to the employees of WASCO were documented in the report of the Annual General Meeting (September 6, 2008). Among other things the change over was expected in December 2009. Needless to say (or write) that this schedule was not met. The situation generated uncertainty and anxiety among the employees. The intended negotiations for the period beginning January 2009 have not started.

The CSA, in collaboration with the National Workers Union (NWU), held meetings with the Minister of the Public Utilities and as a result, meetings were held with the employees. At one such meetings, it was disclosed that the privatization of WASCO was on hold because of a threat by one of the bidders to take litigation measures against Government for apparently fouling the bidding process.

At the time of writing of this report, the status of the matter was as follows:

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- Negotiations were on hold;
- A committee was established by Government to review the options for WASCO;
- The Union were waiting until the end of June (2009) for the recommendations of the Committee so as to advise members on the way forward.

d) Reclassification/Customs Guards

There were anomalies in the classification for Customs Guards that were approved by Cabinet and which was reported in the AGM Report (2008). The matter was discussed with the concerned Customs Guards in Vieux-Fort.

Following representation made by the CSA/Industrial Relation Unit, the anomalies were rectified and adjustments were made to the respective salary scales.

e) Meetings with the Ministry of the Public Service

Meetings with the Ministry of the Public Service continued to serve as a useful mechanism to represent the concerns of members in the Civil Service. Three (3) of these meetings were held in the period under review. The matters/concerns/issues which were tabled for discussion and/or followed up included: -

I. Individual Concerns of members

- Claim for relocation/subsistence allowance – Division of Human Services – Member was compensated
- Employment status – Soufriere Hospital
- Upward mobility – Ministry of Justice – Ministry of Education (Library Services)
- Request for transfer - High Court Registry
- Lateral transfer – Ministry of Home Affairs
- Anomaly re: Employment conditions – Police Department
- Usurping powers of the Public Service Commission – Acting appointment, Ministry of Labour and request to serve Commission of Inquiry
- Compensation for additional work – Audit Department

II. Issues of a general nature

The Ministry of the Public Service informed of Government's intension to pursue the following matters on which the CSA had provided representation: -

- ❖ Sourcing funds to undertake the re-classification in the Public Service – Thus far, two (2) officials of the World Bank held preliminary discussions with representatives of CSA on the matter.
- ❖ Review of the compulsory age (55 years) for retirement from the service.
- ❖ Resumption of work on the Public Service Act.

f) Meetings with the Ministry of Health

Following the example set by the Ministry of the Public Service, the Ministry of Health became the first Ministry/Department in the Civil

Service to hold regular meetings with the CSA to resolve matters of concern to staff.

Unlike the meetings with the Ministry of the Public Service, the shop stewards, from Victoria Hospital in particular, were involved in the meetings.

The issues for which resolution were sought at the meetings with the Ministry of Health included: -

- ✓ Office space – Environmental Health Officers/Vieux-Fort
- ✓ Relocation – Environmental Health/Castries
- ✓ Maintenance Work and Security – Victoria Hospital
- ✓ Salaries, back-pay and reclassification – Upton Gardens’ Girls Centre
- ✓ Working Conditions and Relocation – Senior Citizens Home
- ✓ Working conditions – Golden Hope Hospital

g) Meetings with the Ministry of Justice

The Ministry of Justice was the second Ministry/Department in the Civil Service to adopt the system of regular meetings with the CSA.

Like the Ministry of Health, the shop steward was present at those meetings.

Issues of office space and relocation, health and safety pertaining to the following were discussed and resolved: -

- Registry of the High Court
- Central Agency
- Registry of Intellectual Property
- Civil Status Registry

One matter which continued to frustrate the resolution of some issues and remained of concern to employees and the administration of the Ministry was the interference of the Minister in operational undertakings, eg. furniture, mysteriously disappeared. At the time of writing of this report, the information was that the Permanent Secretary was transferred because of coming at loggerheads with the Minister.

h) Sir Arthur Lewis Community College (SALCC)

During the period under review the management of SALCC agreed to meet with the CSA monthly in the attempt to resolve matters of concern to employees.

The issues that were of concern and were tabled at the monthly meetings included: -

- Upgrading of daily paid employees;
- Poor communication and conflict between security personnel and Director (security);
- Absenteeism among security personnel;
- Implementing provisions for medical tests for farm employees;
- Pension benefit for member who became incapacitated through medical reasons;
- Relocation of a security officer;
- Repairs to library.

3.0 BENEFITS

3.1 Group Medical Plan

(a) Since it was reported in the report to the AGM (2008) of the improvements in the settlement of claims complaints in that matter have been “few and far between “. The focus of the NEC was the removal of kinks in the administration of the plan.

And in one of the meetings held between the NEC and Broker, the mechanism of monthly meetings to update on the operations of the plan was agreed.

(b) Renewal

At the monthly meeting, held on April 17, 2009, the attention of the NEC was drawn to expiration of the plan and the need for its renewal. Quotations from insurers (Sagicor, CLICO, others) were presented by the Brokers.

Also discussed at the meeting (NEC and Brokers) were the concerns of the CSA about the uncertain future of CLICO and its implications to the Group Medical Plan and CSA’s investments in CLICO. The Broker could not reassure the NEC about the concerns over the stability of CLICO>

But self-insurance was one of the alternatives which the CSA could have considered for continuing to provide health insurance to members. Three (3) members of the NEC were identified to comprise a committee to further explore the consideration for self-insurance. The report of the committee was expected by May 31, 2009.

In light of the imminent renewal of the plan, it was agreed for a meeting with the beneficiaries. The meeting was held on April 27, 2009. Approximately 40 members attended.

Members present were informed: -

- That the renewal date of 1st May, 2009 would be extended to 1st June, 2009;
- That inspite of alternative quotations from other insurers, CLICO's quotations remained the best;
- Of the increases to: Doctor's visit, life coverage; major medical; premiums

The meeting of the members agreed to a subsequent meeting to decide the way forward. This subsequent meeting was held on 25th May, 2009. Approximately 75 members were present. After updating members on the way forward and clarification was given on the concerns, members unanimously approved the renewal of the plan with CLICO.

(c) New Applicants

Fifteen (15) new applicants were accepted to the Group Medical Plan during the period under review.

3.2 ID Cards

There was a long delay in the issuing of ID cards to members. An arrangement with the Electoral Department was finally arrived at. As a result, the CSA was able to resume the issuing of ID cards. During the period a total of 163 ID cards were issued. Members from 21 branches were in receipt of these new ID cards.

3.3 New Initiatives

There was little progress on the new initiatives for benefits which were proposed in the report to the AGM (2008): - Housing Scheme, Day Care Facility, Retirement Plan, Investing in land Vieux-Fort.

The NEC was of the strong view that these initiatives should be pursued in the quest to find new ways of attracting new members to the union.

3.4 Scholarships

Following were the members whose children became beneficiaries of CSA's Scholarships in 2008: -

| <u>Parent /Member</u> | <u>Place of Work</u> |
|---------------------------|---|
| 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, etc. |

The child of Marcia Norbal had subsequently accepted a scholarship from the St.Lucia Civil Service Cooperative Credit Union and the parent later reimbursed the CSA of the funds she received.

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

| <u>Parent/Member</u> | <u>Place of Work</u> |
|-------------------------|---|
| St.John Antal | Forestry Department |
| Angel St.Hill | Soufriere Regional Develop. Foundation |
| Brenda Jules | Sir Arthur Lewis Community College |
| Dan Stephen | Victoria Hospital |
| Gilbert Charlery | Sir Arthur Lewis Community College |

4.0 TRAINING

4.1 CSA sponsored/local: Members

During the period under review, the CSA continued to fund/sponsor training of members: -

- (a) 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". Focus was also given to the Staff Orders and Collective Agreements. Forty-five (45) participants benefited from the workshop.
- (b) Two (2) "Orientation Workshops" were held on 10th March and 14th April, 2009, respectively. A total of 48 participants benefited.

4.2 Agency – sponsored training

i.Overseas

Three (3) members of the Youth Committee benefited from training sponsored by agencies to which CSA is affiliated. Details are provided below: -

| 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 |
| Dwite Joseph | PSI/FES | 2-5 December, 2008 | Grenada | Strategic Research for organizing campaigning |

At the time of writing of this report, possibilities were being looked at for the assistance of the ILO for the holding of a Youth Symposium.

ii.Local

Fifteen (15) members were beneficiaries of training that was held locally and sponsored by PSI. The topic of the training was the “Impact of Water Privatization” and was held on 20 November, 2008.

Other attempts made to sensitize members of the General Council on Water Privatisation did not meet with the desired result. A consultation with officials from Public Utilities had to be cancelled because of poor attendance.

4.3 Staff Training

Two (2) members of the Secretariat Staff – Brenda Dayes and Sharleen Peter, were trained in the accounting programme, “Quickbooks”. The training was conducted locally (NRDF) and was sponsored by CSA.

Also, during the period, the Assistant General Secretary – Industrial Relations became the beneficiary of training in Negotiating Skills which was held in Turin, Italy. The training was sponsored by the ILO and facilitated by CSA.

5.0 PARTICIPATORY ACTIVITIES

The activities that were planned for the participation of members were: May Day, CSA Week and the hosting of members of Public Service Association of London. All these were held as planned. There was the perennial problem of poor attendance and participation of members.

Both the May Day and CSA Week observances were low-keyed because of inadequate and late planning. As a result, members were not adequately sensitized and informed of the plans and preparations.

These problems notwithstanding, the domino competition was reported to have been a large success and the shop stewards workshop served as the main highlight of CSA Week (2008).

The hosting of members of the London CSA was a collaborative effort between CSA and Travel Concepts. Travel Concepts was responsible for all the logistics (travel arrangements, accommodation, social events and sports and games). The CSA hosted the visitors for a day at the CSA Centre. The interaction was a success, except to say there was poor participation by members. It was intended for CSA members to engage the visitors in various sports and games. This did not play out as intended because of the dormancy of CSA's Sports Committee.

At the time of writing of this report, Party-in-de-Yard (2009) had just began and it was too early to distill the participation of members vis-à-vis that of the general public.

6.0 ORGANISATION AND ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

6.1 National Executive Committee

It is a provision of CSA's Constitution for the Biennial Convention to elect the NEC for the ensuing of two (2) years. It is therefore apropos to indicate that the out-going NEC are as follows: -

| | | |
|-------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| Bro. Joseph Dosserie | - | President |
| Bro. Fulgence St.Prix | - | 1st Vice President |
| Bro. Wilfred Pierre | - | 2nd Vice President |
| Sis. Josephine Farrell | - | 3rd Vice President |
| Sis. Angelin Remy | - | Secretary |
| Sis. Marcia Clarke | - | Treasurer |

The outgoing Trustees are: -

Bro. Carlisle Marshall
Bro. Cyprian Montrope
Sis. Dalia Philip

Arising out of a meeting of the NEC and Secretariat staff, held on April 10, 2008 an NEC/staff retreat was convened. It was clear from the circumstances that the NEC should have had a separate retreat because of the obvious differences which existed.

This retreat of the NEC was held on the 26th September, 2008. The results were inconclusive. A follow-up retreat of the NEC which was scheduled for 2nd October, 2008, did not take place. Needless to indicate that the rifts and misunderstandings between the NEC members which the retreats sought to bridge and resolve continued to exist and militate against the undertakings of the CSA.

6.2 Committees

During the period under review, the Committees provided for in the Constitution never worked to any degree of satisfaction. As a result, the developmental matters and activities pertaining to women, youth, sports, investment and fund-raising, education and building were all moribund.

The CSA also had representation on some committees established by Government. These included: Travelling and Subsistence, and the Training and Advisory Committee. Bro. Carlisle Marshall and Sis. Josephine Farrell, respectively were the representatives of the CSA.

It is important to inform that the Ministry of the Public Service have presented the CSA with draft copies of the following: -

- A Human Resource Development Policy for the Public Service;
- A document on the review of: -
 - Training policy
 - Tuition refund policy
 - Study leave policy

6.3 Administrative Secretariat: Is a committee of the NEC. Meetings were held during the period under review to consider, among other things, staff concerns, job descriptions, salary levels (of some staff), negotiations and security issues.

6.4 Branches and Shop stewards

Ninety-one (91) branches existed and were to be serviced by the union during the period. Of the 91 branches, 63 were in the Civil Service and 28 from Statutory Boards and/or private entities.

The responses of the union to services and/or requests from the branches were varied. In the main health and safety problems were the major concerns, especially in the Central Service.

The Industrial Relations Unit was successful in consolidating branches at the NDC and NCA> At the NDC, daily paid workers had withdrawn their membership. They were mobilized to register again with the CSA. A large proportion of employees at the NDC were not unionized with the CSA.

As a result of the formation of the Social Development Fund, the PRF and BNTF branches were merged into one.

Attempts were made to ensure that all branches were served by a shop steward. It should be important to report that whilst some individuals have excelled in their roles as shop stewards, many others were dismal in communicating information to members and in notifying the Secretariat of the status of issues in the branches.

Members in some branches complained of poor leadership and the inadequate role played by shop stewards.

Judos should go to the shop stewards who performed and demonstrated leadership in their respective branches.

6.5 Branch meetings/visits

Branch meetings were conducted at two (2) levels, with the involvement/participation of NEC members for familiarization/mobilization, and by the Industrial Relations Unit to deal with specific issues which confronted members of the branch.

(a) Familiarization/Mobilization

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 where the following were discussed: -

- ❖ CSA Week 2008
- ❖ Feedback from meetings with the Ministry of the Public Service (Reclassification, Pensions issues, Public Service regulations)
- ❖ Attitude of members towards work
- ❖ Conclusion of negotiations
- ❖ Branch issues

(b) Industrial Relations issues

Following were the branches where meetings were held to deal with industrial relation issues that affected employees: -

| | | |
|------------------------------------|---|---|
| Customs and Excise Department | - | Shed # 6 Health and Safety |
| Ministry of Justice | - | Health and Safety |
| St.Lucia Marketing Board | - | Concerns/complaints about redundancies |
| Registry of the High Court | - | Health and Safety |
| St.Lucia Fish Marketing Corp. | - | Update on negotiations |
| Government Information Service | - | Staff Orders and Collective Agreement, Work Ethics |
| St.Lucia Social Development Fund | - | Terms and conditions of employment after the merger |
| Soufriere Regional Dev. Foundation | - | Health and Safety/negotiations |
| Sir Arthur Lewis Community College | - | Salary increases |
| Sub-collections Office (V.F.) | - | Health and Safety |

6.6 General Council

Two (2) General Council meetings were held in the period under review and a third was being planned at the time of writing of this report.

One of the two (2) which was held was a Special General Council meeting, on 11th February, 2009 to consider the Work Plan and Budget 2009. The other was a regular General Council meeting, held on 22nd April, 2009.

Another Special General Council meeting was held on May 20, 2009 for the purpose of discussing and assessing the orientation of members of the respective branch about the impasse with the Government on the payment of 7.5% increase in salaries.

6.7 General Meetings

Mention has already been made elsewhere in the report of the Annual General Meeting which was held on 6th September 2008. The significant decisions of the AGM were: -

- The increase in dues from \$20.00 monthly to \$25.00 monthly.
- Increase the value of CSA's scholarship:
 - \$1,000.00 for Forms 1 – 2
 - \$1,500.00 for Forms 3 – 4
 - \$1,000.00 for Forms 5

During the period a series of Extra-Ordinary General Meetings were held during the dispute with the Government of St.Lucia on the payment of 7.5% increase.

6.8 Review of Constitution

The review of the Constitution has not started. Thus far, the attempts made to convene meetings of the Committee that was entrusted with the task have met with failure.

6.9 Membership

At the end of May 2009, the total membership stood at 2, 405. This represented an increase of 48 new members when compared to the same period in 2008.

As should be expected there was some attrition of the membership. There was a total loss of 28 members.

Nine (9) of these were through retrenchment from the SLMB and 19 members withdrew their membership.

6.10 Secretariat/Staff Issues

Salient among the Secretariat/staff issues for the period were the negotiations with the accredited bargaining agent (NWU) for the employees.

The negotiations did not proceed in a cordial manner and was the basis of a one (1) day sick out. The matter was referred to the Special General Council meeting of 11th February, 2009. A delegation of four (4) General Council members were selected to join the NEC Negotiating Team. A settlement was arrived at as follows: -

“A general wage increase of 10.5% for employees receiving below \$2,000.00 monthly, and 9% for employees receiving \$2,000.00 upwards.”

The increases were to be implemented in the following manner: -

(a) For persons earning less than \$2,000.00 monthly: -

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|
| June 1, 2008 to May 31, 2009: | 6% |
| June 1, 2009 to May 31, 2010: | 4.5% |

(b) For persons earning \$2,000.00 + monthly: -

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| June 1, 2008 to May 31, 2009: | 6% |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|

June 1, 2009 to May 31, 2010: 3%

(c) The salary increase for year three (3) to be negotiated.

At the time of writing of this report the draft Collective Agreement was being reviewed by the NEC before signing.

It would be remiss of the NEC if recognition is not given in this report of the contribution of the Secretariat staff to the achievements in the implementation of the Work Plan.

7.0 CONCLUSION

At the time of writing of the Report the Work Plan (2009) was six (6) months in implementation, but the period of the report spanned September 16, 2008 (after the AGM) to August 2009. So, there have been some over-laps in the targets and achievements when the implementation of the Work Play (2009) is taken into consideration.

Thus far, some reasonable conclusion can be drawn by comparing the targets with the achievements.

I. Collective Agreements

| | <u>Targets</u> | <u>Achievements</u> |
|--|----------------|---------------------|
| (a) Number of proposals prepared | 4 | 6 |
| (b) Number of Collective Agreements negotiated | 5 | 11 |
| (c) Implementation monitored | 10 | 8 |
| (d) Proposals researched and prepared for 2010 | 6 | 0 |

II. Grievances

Because of their ad hoc nature, grievances handled could not have been predicted and targeted. However, the achievements were as follows: -

- (a) Health and Safety: (8) were handled and resolved to a fair degree of satisfaction
- (b) Personal Grievances: (20) brought to the attention of the Industrial Relations Unit and 18 were satisfactorily resolved
- (c) Representation:
 - (i) [8] management concerns were engaged at Efforts to represent the concerns of Members, collectively and individually
 - (ii) [2] of the areas (SLMB and WASCO), the issues are still unresolved.
 - (iii) The following which were planned for in

the Central Service have not been resolved:

- non-established positions

- pension

- re-establishment of increments

(iv) Severance package for WASCO workers not finalized.

(v) Terminable benefits for SLASPA made Operable.

(vi) Medical plan for SRDF not in place

III. Mobilization and Recruitment

| | <u>Target</u> | <u>Achievement</u> |
|---|---------------|--------------------|
| • Number recruited from Existing branches | 100 | 48 |
| • New areas unionized | 3 | 1 |
| • Membership of new unionized | 200 | 21 (?) |

IV. Benefits

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|----|
| • Increased membership (medial plan) | 50 | 15 |
| • Questionnaire/survey of membership | partially prepared | |
| • New areas for benefits | no progress | |
| • Review use of CSA building | In progress | |

V. Training

| | | |
|---|---------|---------|
| • Number of orientation workshop | 3 | 2 |
| • Number attending orientation workshop | 50 | 48 |
| • Capacity building workshops (number of Secretariat staff trained) | 40 4 | 45 3 |
| Capacity of young workers (improved) | 0 | 3 |

VI. Organization

(a) Branch meetings

| | | |
|------------------------------|----|----|
| Familiarization/Mobilization | 34 | |
| Industrial Relation issues | | 10 |

(b) General Council meetings 3

It can be deduced from the foregoing that thus far, the CSA was fairly successful in achieving some of the targets of the 2009 Workplan. The impasse with the Government of St. Lucia, which was not targeted and which reflected the nature of the business of trade unions, need special mention in concluding that: -

- ❖ The CSA was not averse to give the Government a reprieve on the payment of 7.5%.
- ❖ The Government had taken a unilateral and intransigent stance on the matter by offering 3% and later, by payment 3.5% in the accounts of Public Servants.
- ❖ In the process, Government demonstrated divisiveness and attempted to discredit the leadership of the unions.
- ❖ The actions undertaken by the unions (CSA and SLTU especially) were spontaneous.
- ❖ The resolution and formal notice of the intent of the CSA to take industrial action propelled the settlement which was arrived at to end the impasse.
- ❖ The compromised settlement of 4.125% was arrived at with 3.37% to be honoured at April 2010.

In the third and fourth quarters of the Work Plan a large effort is required to reactivate the respective committees of the CSA. To date they have been dormant. Thus the mechanisms for attracting the participation of members and generating the interests of non-members have been disappointing.