

Written by

Friday, 04 May 2012 16:02 - Last Updated Friday, 04 May 2012 16:19

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The Grenada Technical and Allied Workers' Union conveys fraternal greetings to all workers on this International Workers' Day. We mark this historic occasion at a time when the economic situation in Grenada continues to be grave and the livelihood of hundreds of workers continue to fall. It is also a situation which witnesses increasing unemployment where large sections of working people have witnessed a significant depreciation in their standard of living.

At this very moment the UK economy has re-entered into recession. This has serious negative implications for the region and Grenada.

Only a couple weeks ago Monarch Airlines withdrew its transatlantic flight into Grenada thus, further tightening the noose on Grenada's economic survival.

Today, public workers have gone for four (4) years without salary adjustments while the cumulative inflation on food over the same period have neared fifty percent (50%).

Fuel and electricity continue to rise and so too is the cost of work but for many workers there have been marginal and in some cases no wage increases.

In the face of this situation the technocratic petty bourgeois have fared very well, several with salaries over five thousand US dollars per month. The recipients of international public service jobs, financed through bilateral agencies, whether they are reforming the so call public service or some other farcical engagement. These are the forces that have colluded together to attack the workers movement and to make political mischief. They destroyed every genuine efforts of the Social Protocol meant to lay the framework for a positive engagement with the State and other social actors during this period of economic turbulence.

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In the last year the working class has witnessed the rapacious might and greed of trans-regional capital when the Ansa McAl Group out of Trinidad and Tobago attempted to crush the workers at the Grenada Breweries. But the Brewery workers thought them the lesson and that is, that the fighting spirit of our indigenous forefathers who stood the ground of the battle at Leapers hill and the fighting spirit of the Fedonist revolutionaries; and the fighting spirit of the revolutionary agro-politariat of the Gairyist movement of 1951 and the fighting spirit of Maurice Bishop, is still alive in the workers of Grenada today.

For sixty-five long days Patrick Antoine and the Ansa McAl Sagba Group had hoped to starve the Brewery workers and their families, but the Regional Trade Union Movement together with local Unions and workers demonstrated an exemplary act of solidarity and the battle was waged each day in the solidarity of the Grenadian working class.

The Brewery workers and the Technical and Allied Workers' Union were not defeated and we call on today's rally to salute the Brewery workers for their heroism, their discipline, their commitment and their unity.

But the struggle against the Grenada Breweries continues and we shall fight them in the Parliament and in the Courts in the same way as we fought them on the streets.

It is indeed shameful that the State unleashed Riot Police against the peaceful workers who were fighting for their dignity and their rights.

We note the struggle which had to be mounted in order to get the Labour Relations Act amended and it would appear that the friends of labour within the Government are on the retreat.

The Technical and Allied Workers' Union recognises the several victories, though small but significant, which the Labour Movement has won so far. We recognise the passage of the Minimum Wage Order and the increase in pay for Security Guards.

Our Union thanks the Honourable Glynis Roberts for her single handed efforts in delivering this improvement to the lives of the many men and women that dawn the uniform of Security Guards in our Country.

We thank her also for the improvement in the minimum wage of Domestic Helpers, Bus Conductors, Catering Assistants, Carpenters, Masons, Caregivers of the Elderly, Pastry men and women, Oven men and Bakers, Cooks, Bar Tenders, Shop Assistants, Utility Helpers and other categories of workers.

We call for a salute to Sis. Glynis Roberts and today we express the empathy of the workers with her as she is challenged with the serious illness of her husband.

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We wish her strength and we want her to know we appreciate the work she has done for the working people of this Country.

But there are more struggles to be waged and more battles to encounter.

We must reduce the slavery working hours of Security Guards and Domestic Helpers whose basic weekly hours of work is in clear violation of the ILO standards.

These workers by law are forced to work sixty (60) hours per week without overtime.

So too are Catering Assistants whose work week is forty-four (44) hours.

We make a forceful demand for Grenada laws to respect the forty (40) hours work week maximum of ordinary working time.

The Technical and Allied Workers' Union announces the commencement of this battle so Employers take fair notice.

In 2008 the Labour Movement became an integral part of the change movement.

The programmatic platform of this Movement envisaged the deepening of participatory democracy in which organised labour, the NGO community would have been brought into the governance of this Country and a closer working relationship between the formalities of State power and the organs of popular people participation would have evolved a symbiotic relationship in which the voice of labour and working people would have been able to effectively shape public policy.

However this was not to be.

The technocratic petty bourgeois still-born the process and rather than build a Government of inclusiveness has attempted to exclude organised labour at every turn. Today the national struggle in the Country is not about improving the lives of ordinary people but is about the promotion of fear and ideological hysteria created to retain the unbridled influence of the technocratic petty bourgeois over the State so that the following popular programs have had no current say – national transport service for school children, a Consumer Protection Agency, a Public Utilities Commission, worker representation on Boards of Directorship. All of these and other popular measures have all fallen by the wayside and instead the focus of the state is to fight the proverbial evil and the so call leftist.

Opportunities for exploiting our hydro carbon resources located between Venezuela and Grenada are being lost and the growing improvishness and hopelessness of our people continues.

Today our Country is at a political cross road and what we have witnessed in the struggle over

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the amendments to the Labour Relations Act shows quite clearly that the workers of this Country need a genuine working class political party. The official Opposition did not lend support to the measures simply because within the bowels of its organisation is now represented Grenadian capital who is no longer satisfied to provide money but wish to have their hands directly on the levers of power.

Within the current Government the working class tendency has been weakened and whether or not there will be a formal break with the Labour Movement will be anyone's guess.

The current economic crisis demands that workers strengthen their relationship with their organisations.

Workers need to ensure that there is active democracy within the Trade Unions and they must ensure the building of unbreakable solidarity.

There are other issues which TAWU firmly believes must be immediately tackled and one such issue is the urgent need for anti sexual harassment legislation.

TAWU is deeply concerned about the reported cases of sexual harassment at the National Lottery Authority.

We demand that the Minister of Sports take immediate steps to suspend those who have been accused of these reprehensible acts. Further, we call for the immediate suspension of the accused as well as the Board of Directors who refuse to take the necessary steps to protect the female employees.

In the coming days the Technical and Allied Workers' Union shall officially launch a picket of the National Lotteries Authority and we call on all women organisation to join us in demanding an immediate end to sexual harassment and speedily bringing to the Parliament anti sexual harassment legislation, those who wish to hide behind the erstwhile badge of revolution shall find no quarter given by the Technical and Allied Workers' Union where the despicable conduct of sexual harassment is concerned. We know that the Government has the information and we are gravely concerned about their failure to act. Good

governance is not an abstraction but must be found in concrete action which protects the dignity of people.

We take this opportunity to salute the workers of Grenada, the region and the world as we celebrate yet another International Workers' Day.

Long Live the workers!!

# MESSAGE FROM THE GRENADA TECHNICAL AND ALLIED WORKERS' UNION INTERNATIONAL WORKERS

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Long Live TAWU!!

Long Live the Trade Union Movement!!

Forward ever, backward never!!