

WELCOME REMARKS

Delivered by

Her Honour Mrs. Deborah Thomas Felix
President of the Industrial Court

at the Meet With the Court of Symposium 3

May 16th, 2015



Good morning to everyone.

Welcome to the third symposium of the Industrial Court. In the interest of time I wish to state that all protocols are observed and respected.

This year the Industrial Court celebrates 50 years as an organization. After the Industrial Stabilisation Act was proclaimed on 20th March, 1965, the first sitting of Court took place on 29th April, 1965 at the Sixth Supreme Court at the Red House in Port of Spain. The Court, headed by the very illustrious and brilliant jurist, Mr. Justice Isaac Hyatali as he then was, began to etch a pathway to social justice delivery in Trinidad and Tobago. Fifty years after, the Court continues to open that pathway and has developed guidelines and standards of what are good industrial relations principles and practice.

Today's symposium is one of the events by which we celebrate the achievement of the Court over the past five decades, while at the same time we reflect upon the jurisprudence which has developed over time.

At the opening of the law term in 2012, in my first address as President of the Court, I informed stakeholders and the public that,

“the decision-making process and the dispensation of justice by the Industrial Court depends on evidence, of which up-to-date information on wages and productivity is an important component.Given the increase in the quantum of labour market disputes that are coming before the Court, some specific focus needs to be placed on strengthening the country’s information base on wages and productivity across all sectors in the economy. To be more pointed, I am aware that efforts are underway to enhance the statistical information provided by the Central Statistical Office and I would certainly like to see greater attention being placed on the provision of quarterly labour market statistics, especially wage and productivity indices by the industrial sector. This would not only go a long way in helping the judges of this Court form a solid picture of emerging trends in our labour market, but would place us in a better position to evaluate the impact of these changes on our industrial climate. As you can well appreciate, these pockets of information are critical inputs that inform many of the final judgments of our Court.

In the meantime, we have begun a process of re-organizing our in-house statistics on wages and productivity and have sought some assistance from the Central Bank to help us refine our labour market data and methods. I am looking forward in the not too distant future to the issuance by this Court of a statistical bulletin that could provide the public with further information about the state of the industrial relations environment.”

Each year since the opening of the Law Term in 2012, a member of staff is sent to Washington D.C., USA. to be trained in Measuring Productivity or Economic Indicators.

The Court has not yet compiled data on wage and productivity but we have in fact embarked on a continuous exercise to review and develop new data sets to assist with that analysis. I am proud to announce that the Court has now published its first “**Trends in Labour and Industrial Relations**” Bulletin. The Bulletin provides industrial relations statistics of the Court’s fiscal year for the period 2010 to 2015.

The information coverage of the Bulletin includes the following:

- Volume of Matters Filed and Disposed of at the Industrial Court
- Nature of Trade Disputes
- Type of Matters Filed at the Registry of the Court
- Industrial Action by Type

Today we also launch our 50th Anniversary Magazine. This magazine is titled: **the Journey to Gold, Industrial Court of Trinidad and Tobago, 1965 - 2015**. It features interviews from:

- The Honourable Errol Mcleod, Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development and Former President General of the Oil Workers’ Trade Union
- Mr. Hamilton Johnson, Oldest surviving Judge of the Industrial Court
- His Honour Mr. Albert Aberdeen, Former President of the Transport and Industrial Workers' Union and current Member of the Industrial Court
- Mr. Basdeo Panday, Former President of the All Trinidad General Workers Union and Former Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

- Mr. Michael de la Bastide, Former Chief Justice of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and Former President of the Caribbean Court of Justice
- Mr. Douglas Mendes S.C.
- Senator the Honourable Elton Prescott S.C.
- Mr. Martin Daly S.C.
- Mr. Lindhurst Murray, Industrial Relations Practitioner
- Ms Ida Le Blanc, General Secretary, National Union of Domestic Workers

It also features reflection on the contribution which the great Joe Young made in Trinidad and Tobago.

These industrial relations icons along with many others have played very key roles in the development of the Court as the main institution for social justice delivery.

The magazine provides a valuable insight into what was happening in our nation and at the Court, particularly in the 1960's and 1970's, and provides perspective of our continued pathway to social justice.

To share some history with you, the first judgment of the Court was No. 1/1965 between Federated Workers Trade Union and the University of the West Indies and the Attorney General on behalf of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. The coram comprised of:

- The Honourable Mr Justice I.E. Hyatali
- His Honour H.A. Hutson, Esquire
- His Honour J. O'Neil Lewis, Esquire

and the lawyers who appeared were:

- Mr. K. Hudson Phillips
- Mr. H. A. Selby Wooding
- Mr. R. A. Crane

A copy of this case can be found in the magazine.

Many thanks to Dr. Sheila Rampersad and her team for accepting our offer to produce this historic magazine. Well done!

Today we have in attendance a large cross-section of our stakeholders and I therefore thought it best to launch the 50th Anniversary magazine and the bulletin at this event.

A copy of the magazine and the Bulletin will be distributed to each of you at the end of this morning's session. I do hope that the contents are useful.

Today we have presentations from several distinguished speakers today, namely:

- Dr. Ralph Henry, Economist
- Dr. Leighton Jackson, Deputy Dean, Faculty of Law, UWI, Mona Campus, Jamaica
- Mr. Jefferson Cumberbatch, Lecturer, UWI, Cavehill Campus, Barbados
- Mr. Gaekwad Ramoutar, Chief Inspector, Occupational Safety and Health Authority
- Mr. Rainer Pritzer, Senior Specialist, Social Dialogue and Labour Administration Labour Organization Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean

I wish to thank them in advance for their participation and support. My thanks also to Johann Chukaree for his musical interlude and excellent rendition of the National Anthem.

The format of our question and answer segment is the same as the symposia in the past two years.

For those of you, who have questions for the presenters, please write the questions on the cards which have been provided on your table and place these cards the glass bowl which is on the table and member of staff will collect it from you.

I do hope you enjoy your time here with us. Thank you for listening.