



**INDUSTRIAL COURT
of Trinidad and Tobago**

Remarks

by

HER HONOUR MRS. HEATHER SEALE
President, Industrial Court of Trinidad and Tobago

at the

SERVICE OF DIVINE WORSHIP

on the occasion of the
60th Anniversary of the Industrial Court of Trinidad and Tobago

under the theme

“Dealing with Labour Affairs for 60 years”

PARISH OF THE ASSUMPTION
70-72 Long Circular Road, Maraval,
Trinidad and Tobago W.I.

Thursday 20th March, 2025
9:30 AM

The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. Speaking analogously, today the Industrial Court takes its sixtieth step in what we trust will be a very long journey for the Court.

Today marks the 60th anniversary of the date on which the *Industrial Stabilisation Act*, No. 8 of 1965, was assented to. It was passed during a state of emergency. Here we are today celebrating our diamond jubilee during another state of emergency.

On 31st July, 1972 the ISA was repealed and replaced by the *Industrial Relations Act*, Chapter 88:01, which mandated the Court to make better provision for the stabilisation, improvement and promotion of industrial relations and which is still in existence as amended over the years.

Today is a day for giving thanks and honouring those Members and staff, past and present, who have contributed to making the Industrial Court the institution it is today. The Court began with five Members and in its first year, April 29, 1965 to April 28, 1966, 49 matters were filed. Today the Court is comprised of twenty-four Members and between 800 to one thousand matters are now filed annually.

Those who took the first steps in the hallowed halls of the Court were, Sir Isaac Hyatali, then Justice of Appeal designated as President of the Court on March 31, 1965, Vice-President His Honour Mr. Harold A. Hutson, a barrister-at-law of more than ten years standing, appointed April 15, 1965. Their Honours, Mr. J. O Neil Lewis a qualified Economist and Dr. Zin Henry also a qualified Economist with experience in industrial relations, were both appointed April 1, 1965. The appointment of His Honour Mr. G.C. Awang, a qualified Accountant took effect on August 16, 1965.

The labour in the vineyard of presiding in open Court began on April 29 1965, so next month the Court will celebrate the 60th anniversary of its first sitting. Its very first matter was Trade Dispute No 1 of 1965 between the Federated Workers Trade Union, Party No 1, the University of the West Indies, Party No. 2 and The Attorney General on behalf of

the People of Trinidad and Tobago, Party No. 3. It was presided over by President Hyatali and their Honours Hutson and O'Neil Lewis.

All of the parties were represented by Counsel, names which I am sure when I call them, you will agree made up a who's who of the legal fraternity. The Union was represented by Mr. K. Hudson-Phillips, the University by Mr. H.A. Selby Wooding and the Attorney General by Crown Counsel Mr. R. A. Crane. The Court delivered its judgment in the first matter on June 15, 1965.

The Court has always boasted of a dedicated and loyal staff and this remains so today. Among the early members of staff whose loyalty and efficient service were recognised by the first President in the Court's First Annual Report for the period April 29, 1965 to April 28, 1966, were the Acting Registrar Mr. Conrad Douglin, Senior Court Reporter Ms. Eugenia Hunte, Probationer Stenographer Ms. Rosalind Murray, and the Court's Messenger and Orderly, Mr. Claudius Thomas.

Over the last 60 years, the contribution of the Court to industrial peace and stability has fostered social and economic growth in Trinidad and Tobago. This cannot be underscored and I dare say it has been recognised by all of the Court's stakeholders. Such an achievement would not have been possible without the sterling service of dedicated and independent Judges, 6 of whom have been with the Court for over twenty years. I joined that select group, last year. We have all walked with the Court in its ruby, gold and now diamond anniversary.

The Court owes a debt of gratitude to our stakeholders who challenge us to give of our best. You ensure that our intellect remains sharp and our tempers even. Our jurisprudence would not have developed without you.

On behalf of the Court, I wish to acknowledge the recent passing of two industrial relations practitioners who appeared before us, Mr. Garth Arneaud and Mr Codrington Winchester. May their souls rest in peace.

Today I wish to recognise the contributions of all the past Judges, Registrars and members of staff who have served over the past 60 years, many of whom have graciously joined us in celebrating today.

Permit me to express my gratitude to the Court's Team, headed by the Vice-President, and including our Communications Officer cum *defacto* Protocol Officer, our Head Usher and ushers, all of whom are members of staff, our Security Manager and to every staff member who worked tirelessly to ensure that this Service of Divine Worship became a reality today and to all of those in attendance. To our Registrar on whom we rely to ensure necessary funds are available, no mean feat, we are grateful.

To the Most Reverend Charles Jason Gordon, Archbishop of Port of Spain, whose address I am sure we are all eager to hear; to Reverend Father Tang Kai and the Parish of the Assumption and to Reverend Father Ashton Pierre who while no longer in this Parish answered our call because of prior commitments of Reverend Father Tang Kai, and to Dr. Ellis Burris, President of the IRO, we say thanks to you all.

I express the Court's gratitude also to our Pannist, Natasha Joseph and Vocalists, QEDTT as well as to the media

I may have broken with protocol but it would be remiss of me if I did not thank Her Excellency the President, the Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Chief Justice and the Honourable Attorney General and other Ministers for accepting the Court's invitation to participate in our celebration today, especially given their busy schedules this week.

I must take this opportunity, especially as we are now in the Lenten period and also in the holy month of Ramadan, to thank God for his grace in allowing the Court to continue over the past 60 years, and hopefully, for at least sixty more. I would have missed a golden opportunity, or perhaps I should say a diamond one, if I did not offer a prayer of supplication also. The Court has been in its current location since 1997 and it is now in

urgent need of repair, refurbishment and expansion. May our prayer be heard so that we will not be left crying in the wilderness like John the Baptist.

Thanks to all of our esteemed guests for taking the time out of what we know is a very busy schedule to grace us with your presence. We truly appreciate it and hope that you will find that it has been time well spent, if for no other reason than that you have been in the Presence of God.

Thank You.

Her Honour Mrs. Heather Seale
President, Industrial Court