

Guyana Trades Union Congress condemns construction site that refuses to employ Guyanese labour

A new Marriott Hotel in Guyana, being built by the Shanghai Construction Group at a cost of US\$51 million, intends to only employ non-union Chinese labour.

In the face of a call by the Guyana Trades Union Congress (GTUC) for Guyanese to be employed in constructing the Marriott Hotel, a senior company official said the use of Chinese labour was the best deal to ensure the project finishes on time, but GTUC General Secretary Lincoln Lewis stated that the reasons given by Privatisation Unit head Winston Brassington for the nonemployment of Guyanese were an "outrage."

Outrage

"The Guyana Trades Union Congress is deeply disturbed, highly dissatisfied and cannot and will not rest until there is a reversal of this travesty on the Guyanese people. We shall be mobilising affiliates of the Guyana Trades Union Congress ... and all sections of the working people," said GTUC president



*Vice Presidents Marlyn Chee-a-tow and Panoram Singh
 President Norris Witter and General Secretary Lincoln Lewis*

Norris Witter.

On 14th February, 50 people picketed outside the Marriott Hotel construction site, demanding that Guyanese workers be employed there.

Caribbean Labour Solidarity wishes to express its support for the stand taken by the GTUC and will mobilise international support for their stance.

Sandals moves into Grenada

Sandals Resorts International (SRI) recently announced the purchase in Grenada of LaSource Resort, a previously family-owned business, for an undisclosed sum. The agreement to acquire the resort was reached after discussions with the government of Grenada, which has reportedly agreed to waive the company's payment of corporate tax for 25 years. Other concessions disclosed by Finance Minister Nazim Burke include waiving VAT for 15 years on consumer goods, waiving import duties for 25 years, and also placing a cap on Sandals' property taxes for 25 years.

The Grenada Foundation (UK) has written an open letter to Minister Burke expressing grave concerns about the one-sided incentives being granted to this capitalist venture, the precedents being set for future investments in Grenada, and the wider Caribbean, in addition to the adverse consequences likely to ensue for local people and enterprises.

Read the full text of the letter on our website:
<http://www.cls-uk.org.uk/grenada-letter.html>

Also in this edition of **CUTLASS**

Elections in the Caribbean
 Barbados, Grenada, Cuba, Venezuela as well as our friends in Ecuador

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International Women's Day
 Joint event with Global Women's Strike

CLS visits Barbados
 Meetings with the Barbados Workers Union

Jayne Cortez and Tony Martin
 A poet and a scholar

Report on a two-week visit to Barbados, January 2013

by Luke Daniels

While visiting Barbados in January 2013, together with Margaret Busby, I set out to make contacts with trade unionists, local activists and academics to sound out views on a possible conference of the left in the Caribbean to mark the 40th anniversary of CLS.

On Monday 21 January 2013 - Erroll Barrow Day, a national holiday - we attended a "family funday" organised by the Barbados Workers' Union at their Labour College, where we first met Ulric Sealy, the college's outgoing president. He introduced us to Orlando "Gabby" Scott, BWU senior assistant general secretary and editor of their journal *The Unionist*, who in turn introduced us briefly to Sir Roy Trotman, the General Secretary of the BWU. We had a short chat and agreed to meet again later in the week.

On 24 January, we visited the BWU head office, Solidarity House, in Bridgetown, where we spent about 45 minutes with Sir Roy Trotman. We had a general discussion about the difficulties faced by workers and trade unionists in the region. He said with a recession on, workers' rights were under attack, leading to several disputes: with LIME telecommunications, and with the water and electricity authorities. Also an Independent senator, Trotman is well respected and featured almost daily in the newspapers. The threat of a general strike resulted in a public apology from LIME in connection with the arbitrary sacking of 97 workers. I briefed him on the history of CLS, our aims and objectives, and informed him of our recent activities and about our tentative plans to mark our 40th anniversary. I presented him with a copy of Richard Hart's *Caribbean Workers' Struggles*, as well as my book *Pulling the Punches: Defeating Domestic Violence*.

On Monday 28 January, we had lunch with the veteran writer George Lamming (an author formerly published by Margaret Busby at Allison & Busby), who was a close friend of the late Lionel Jeffreys, co-founder of CLS. Lamming was pleased to hear news of Richard Hart and to receive a copy



Luke with Ulric Sealy, Hugh Arthur and Gabby Scott

of *Caribbean Workers' Struggles*. I mooted the idea of a conference in the Caribbean and Lamming suggested that regional integration would be an important topic on which to focus. He presented us with copies of two substantial volumes that he had edited in 1999 *Enterprise of the Indies* and *On the Canvas of the World*.

On Tuesday, 29 January, we were invited to lunch with trade unionists Ulric Sealy, Hugh Arthur and Gabby Scott to consolidate relationships. They had visited Guyana many times to meet with trade unionists, and mentioned in particular GAWU and NAACI. Hugh Arthur is the former President General of the BWU.

We also met with Cherise Adjodha, who works with the UN on women's issues, and gave us a report she wrote based on her own research, entitled *Rapid Assessment of Sexual & Reproductive Health & HIV Policies, Systems & Services in Grenada*.



Luke presents Richard Hart's latest book to Sir Roy

News from the UK

Mary Seacole

Mary Seacole is not only safe on the national curriculum but has moved from optional learning to mandatory, and it's all thanks to you.



More than 36,000 people signed the petition and this campaign has pushed the Department for Education to confirm that Mary Seacole will continue to be an important part of history lessons in our schools.

Hands off our History!

We regret to announce the deaths of three comrades:

Tony Martin (1942 - 2013), emeritus professor of Africana Studies at Wellesley College, prolific author of scholarly works of Black History, especially on Marcus Garvey..



Jayne Cortez (1934 - 2012) poet and passionate cultural activist, on page and platform, who believed: "Art can make us see and feel reality and help change that reality... Art is a part of protest."



Jan Carew (1929 - 2012), writer committed to the cultural unity of the black world, who excelled in academia, politics and the arts, a leading scholar for half-a century in pan-African and Caribbean studies.



Elections

Barbados

The Democratic Labour Party (DLP) of Prime Minister Freundel Stuart secured a narrow third term in office over the Barbados Labour Party (BLP), led by Owen Arthur, with a two-seat majority on 21 February 2013. The BLP had boycotted parliament in protest at the delay in the government naming the election date. The polls were widely fluctuating, with some predicting a victory for the BLP, which is seen as the party advocating austerity as a solution to the stagnating economy. Widely fluctuating opinion polls had sometimes predicted a victory for the BLP, which is seen as the party advocating austerity as a solution to the stagnating economy. Some argue that that there is not much difference in political outlook between the parties, but the two-seat victory could be the difference between survival and hardship.

Cuba

Elections in Cuba have just taken place for delegates to municipal and provincial assemblies. The delegates to the National Assembly are elected from within these municipal authorities, as well as from plenary meetings of the mass organisations such as the trade unions and the Federation of Cuban Women.

The communist party does not propose, nominate or promote candidates, but all citizens are eligible to stand and must be nominated in an open, public meeting. Everyone over 16 can vote and the polls are symbolically guarded by children and teenagers. Addressing the assembly following his re-election, President Raul Castro said: "This will be my last term." In his speech, he stressed: "I was not chosen to be president to restore capitalism to Cuba. I was elected to defend, maintain and continue to perfect socialism, not destroy it."

Ecuador

Ecuador's President Rafael Correa has been re-elected for a third term with more than 50% of the vote. Addressing supporters in the capital, Quito, he called for "another four years of revolution". "Nobody can stop this revolution," he told a crowd of supporters gathered outside the balcony of the Carondelet Palace in Quito. "The colonial powers are not in charge anymore, you can be sure that in this revolution it's Ecuadoreans who are in charge." During his six years in power, he has expanded access to healthcare and education and improved thousands of

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Caribbean Labour Solidarity and the Global Women's Strike
 Invite you to participate in our joint **International Women's Day** event
"Surviving Globally, Surviving in the UK"

on Saturday 9 March 2013 11am-7pm at Crossroads Women's Centre, 25 Wolsey Mews, London NW5 2DX

The day will focus on organising for survival: what obstacles we face, where we're making progress, and how we can organise together. While the 1% gets wealthier, most of us are struggling – from China, Guyana, Haiti, Peru and Palestine, to India, Pakistan, Nigeria and Tamil Eelam. We face starvation, war, economic and ecologic devastation, and theft of our resources. In the UK we face the dismantling of the welfare state – unprecedented cuts, unemployment, privatisation, wholesale corruption, lowering pay, racism, overwork, destitution, homelessness and criminalisation.

We aim to draw out the connections among grassroots women's experiences and struggles around the world and in the UK, so we can strengthen each other and be more effective. Keynote speaker **Selma James** will reclaim the experience of the Ruvuma Development Association in Tanzania, which created a society based on collective accountability and equity among women and men, children and adults . The day will close with the first UK screening of *Where Should the*



Selma James

Birds Fly by

Fida Qista, a young Palestinian filmmaker from Rafah. She has movingly recorded the struggle of the Gaza community during the horrific Israeli invasion and bombardment of December 2008 and January 2009.

The event is unfunded. We invite your organisation to sponsor it by making a small contribution (£10-25 for unfunded groups, £25-50 for funded groups). Please let us know if you can contribute by putting it on your website, and emailing our leaflet to your networks. We look forward to hearing from you and celebrating IWD together.

Elections

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miles of highways. Poverty rates have dropped.

Grenada

Keith Mitchell, leader of the New National Party (NNP), has swept the National Democratic Congress (NDC) from office following 19 February elections in Grenada. Despite its tiny electorate Grenada continues to play a significant ideological role across the region following the American invasion of that country in 1983 and their introduction of ideologically driven free market policies. Immediately following the elections there was bitter condemnation of the tenure of Prime Minister Thomas and his team, which were seen as ineffective, incompetent and divisive. The focus of much of this anger was directed towards Nazim Burke, former Finance Minister (see page 1 of this issue).

One NDC minister who was fired by Thomas, senator Arley Gill, said the former prime minister has "reaped the harvest that he himself cultivated" by promoting division, and playing favouritism within the party and government. He went on to say, "I am extremely happy that Nazim Burke lost his St. George North East seat," Whilst it may be too early to work out the direction that Mitchell will take Grenada, many believe that his government will revert to its former efforts, namely that of shady dealings and involvement with murky financial overseas characters.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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Fees. Individual £12.00 conc. £5.00 • Organisations £15
 National/International Organisations £25.00

Donation

Remittance to be sent to:
CLS, 29 Myddelton Street, London EC1R 1UA, UK



or write to the secretary at cariblabsol@yahoo.co.uk
 Caribbean Labour Solidarity meets on the first Sunday in the month at:
 Hackney Co-operative Development
 62 Beechwood Road, E8
Everyone welcome to attend and participate