

ABSTRACT

The construction industry of Trinidad and Tobago has grown rapidly since 1974 to maintain its important role in the economy. Wages and industrial relations have contributed in no small measure to the present growth of the industry. In this study, firms were divided into three broad categories: foreign, large local and small local firms. A sampling comprising twenty-four (24) unionised establishments involved in construction activities over a ten year period were used to determine the level of wages and benefits existing in the industry. Real wages were then compared to determine whether workers have kept abreast of the inflationary trend as measured by the Index of Retail Prices. Gross Domestic Product and per capita GDP for the construction industry were also used to aid in the evaluation.

The industrial relations climate in the construction industry was analysed by considering the number and causes of disputes referred to the Ministry of Labour and the Industrial Court, as well as the amount of work stoppages and mandays lost. Plotting these variables against the number of agreements expiring and signed, correlation curves were drawn. The results showed that a reasonable correlation existed between number of disputes reported and number of agreements expiring.

The main conclusions drawn from this study were:

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- (a) Construction workers are amongst the highest paid workers in the country with an average weekly wage of \$252.
- (b) The real wages of construction workers expressed in 1970 prices have increased over the study period. This has allowed them to keep abreast of the inflationary trend as measured by the IRP.
- (c) The major causes of disputes in the construction industry are wages and conditions of employment, breakdown in negotiations and the dismissal of workers.