

**NAMING OF THE TRADE UNION EDUCATION
INSTITUTE
THE HUGH LAWSON SHEARER
TRADE UNION EDUCATION INSTITUTE**

Tuesday, February 28, 2006

Salutations

We are ^{all} gathered here for a ceremony to mark the renaming of the Trade Union Education Institute. It is a fitting tribute to one of the giants of ^{the} trade union movement in Jamaica and one whose contribution to the development of the labour movement in the English-speaking Caribbean is now legendary.

But for most of us, it is much more than that. I regard it more as a celebration of the magnanimity of spirit which my colleague and friend the late Most Honourable Hugh Lawson Shearer, former Prime Minister of Jamaica and President of the Bustamante Industrial Trade Union, displayed throughout his ^{active} public life in Jamaica.

This Institute ^{is} was indeed one such ^{clear} evidence of that spirit. For he ^{it was} it was who led discussions with the AFL-CIO of which William Doherty the first United States Ambassador to independent Jamaica was ^{at one time} a leading official.

This resulted in a grant from USAID that had oversight responsibility for a number of similar trade union education institutes throughout Latin America ^{and the Caribbean}.

Of course, we should not bury ^{today} the reminder that all of this was in the frigid days of the Cold War, but the local progenitors of this Institute ensured ^{that} it would ^{never} not become a pawn in the ideological warfare and so ^{they} made sure that its doors were open to lecturers and students of radically different political hues.

In the interest of trade union solidarity and national unity, Hugh Lawson invited his friend and colleague Michael Manley of the NWU along with Hopeton Caven of the TUC to be partners in the founding of the Trade Union Education Institute.

at one time they were known as the three newspapers

Despite the jurisdictional reality of the Jamaican labour movement then, he persuaded his colleagues to locate the Institute at the University of the West Indies on the Mona Campus, ^{which was} a neutral spot. He believed this would facilitate the unity and solidarity so ^{and correctly so} necessary for the building of a new nation and the shaping of the Jamaican labour landscape in post-Independent Jamaica.

But He did not leave it there. Both he and Michael Manley taught regularly at the Institute in its fledgling years. They made available to the teaching staff all the young officers of both the BITU and NWU ^{many of whom are present here this pm} to assist the Director of Studies in the planning and development of training courses for the scores of delegate cohorts who attended three or four courses a year.

They did ^{much} more. They extended the services to the wider Caribbean, going beyond what is now the CARICOM Caribbean to the Dutch Antilles. ^{as well} The TUEI was to become the model for similar training institutions subsequently established in Guyana and Barbados and more recently ⁱⁿ the Bahamas.

Hugh Shearer understood the importance of providing for trade union officers, delegates and industrial relations practitioners a broad sweep of knowledge which would provide for a better understanding of trade unionism in the wider context of the region's socio-economic and political development.

The TUEI was later to help develop the social welfare programme of the Labour Movement by facilitating the participation of the present Director of Studies, Ms. Marva Phillips in teaching and research and especially in the promotion of female leadership in the trade union movement throughout the region.

This served to attract a sizeable grant from the Inter-American Foundation. Additional ILO support allowed ^{for} advanced training, with the location of consultants funded by the ILO in the Institute for a number of years.

Hugh Shearer demonstrated with insight the value of collaboration, ^{of} partnership, ^{of} unity and ^{a and constant} sharp focus on the task at hand – namely the solidarity of the trade union movement. All of us who have been in public life ^{in coming or out going} understand too well the importance of such attributes.

He is, I am sure pleased to know of the labour fraternity adding his name to this Institute which has done so much over the past 40 years to upgrade the leadership of his beloved labour movement through ^{the instruments of} education and training.

His remarkable contribution to the development of trade unionism is evident in the skills and creativity he brought to the negotiating table. But perhaps above all was his unspeakable belief in the values of trust, fairness, equity and integrity which epitomised his long and distinguished career as a negotiator par excellence.

Hugh Lawson Shearer was a man of his word. His passion for the rights and welfare of workers and his tough and uncompromising stance on issues of principles, never caused him to either sacrifice or surrender the principle of mutual respect or fail to honour a commitment given around the bargaining table. This was the measure of the man. ^{As you indicated a negotiator who would have there was no need for anything in the industry} who we knew as a very tall man

Hugh Shearer was the quintessential negotiator. He began to sense very early in his career the inadequacies of traditional negotiations and sought to transform the collective bargaining process from an instrument of conflict to a platform for cooperation and mutuality of interest.

Perhaps far more importantly was Hugh Shearer's absolute regard for the sanctity of the industrial relations machinery, and his belief in the process established for the resolution of industrial disputes. The processes and machinery established by the industrial relations system have been the result of the collaborative efforts of the social partners – the government, employers' organizations and trade unions – and throughout his life, Hugh Lawson Shearer was always mindful of the need for the parties to ^{Preserve} respect the system and to preserve its integrity.

Even in conciliation at the Ministry of Labour, Hugh Shearer was able to bring value to the process through his inventive, collaborative and persistent search for mutual gains and the creation of value in the resolution of disputes.

The evidence of his legacy is clearly recognised in the Public Sector Memorandum of Understanding between the Government and the Jamaica Confederation of Trade Unions. It has brought with it a new negotiating ideology, ^{on which is} symbiotic, and predisposed to creating value by means of the bargaining process.

I am ~~tempted to regard it as~~ the 'Hugh Lawson Shearer Accord' for as much as the MOU is without doubt a significant historic event which has shaped the future of labour-management cooperation in the public sector, it was certainly the outstanding leadership of Hugh Lawson Shearer which has influenced the final outcome of this celebrated Agreement.

It is largely through his efforts, the exemplary behaviour he consistently displayed around the bargaining table, his commitment to values, his disarming sense of humour and unfailing loyalty to the cause of the working class, which has brought unquestioned recognition to the trade union movement as a critical partner in the process of national development.

As President of the JCTU, Hugh Lawson Shearer was relentless in his campaign to secure an awareness and consciousness not only among workers, but managers as well, about the changing rules of international trade in this age of globalisation and its impact on Jamaica's labour force.

^{consistently}
He was one to argue that the labour market needed to show the kind of flexibility that would ^{serve to} improve productivity, attract investment inflows and increase job prospects, but was quick to caution that no reform of the labour market should ever compromise the rights and interests of the Jamaican workers.

^{re cognized}
This is an important principle ~~long established~~ by the Government of Jamaica as we carry through the process of labour market reform. I must therefore take particular note of the result of a preliminary study from the University of the West Indies which shows that the cost of redundancy payment has not been an inhibiting factor to the restructuring of businesses. I also take note of the fact that many human resource practitioners are sold on the importance of the Employment Termination and Redundancy Payment Act as a social tool to protect the interest of ^{and} workers.

^{important}
It is ~~appropriate~~ for me to once again restate the fundamental premise upon which the government has approached labour reform, ^{it} and that is to create a climate of flexibility to enhance competitiveness, ^{attract} investment, ^{spur} growth and job creation while ^{at the same time} providing the necessary social protection, and preserving the rights, interests and welfare of the labour force.

The legacy of the Most Honourable Hugh Lawson Shearer, is of no less importance than his bequest to the nation Jamaica as its third Prime Minister.

He paved the way to subsume Trade Union rivalry within the broader framework of a common front in advancing the welfare of workers and yet always mindful of the ultimate interests of the nation. His competitive zest ^{do which he made no apology} was at all times exerted according to the templates of industrial solidarity consistent with national development and social advancement.

^{somewhat restrictive}
From the ~~active~~ field of play, he became the Captain of the JCTU and from the pavilion he rolled the pitch for the historic MOU. A successor agreement is not a follow-on; it is a movement from the one-day game to a Test Series – not against each other as combatants – but as joint social partners in facing the hostile bowling on an uneven global pitch.

When Hugh Lawson retired from the active political field of play, ^{support} he would call me on several mornings to give his assessment and some advice from what he call the 'pavilion'.

I know he is looking down from a higher pavilion today, and asking with his usual chuckle – "Is all of this really for me?"

CONCLUSION

In dedicating the Trade Union Education Institute to the memory of this great Jamaican, let it represent an edifice which will always symbolise Hugh Lawson Shearer's unflinching commitment to upholding the cause of justice, equality, economic and social upliftment of the Jamaican workers.

Let it symbolise his enduring belief in the education and training of workers; his indefatigable struggle to build trade union unity; his redemptive role in fashioning a symbiotic negotiating strategy to collective bargaining; his utilitarian approach to negotiations; and his good natured qualities and humility which endeared us all to him.