

EDITORIAL



Minister Foulkes pledges support for GB workforce

Minister Dion Foulkes

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YOUR WEATHER

82°F
Sun and some clouds with a shower or thunderstorm around

SUNRISE: 6:31 a.m.
SUNSET: 7:51 p.m.
HIGH TIDE: 3:34 a.m. - 4:04 p.m.
LOW TIDE: 9:55 a.m. - 10:11 p.m.
WINDS: NNE at 12 mph

See Page 10 for full round-up

The Freeport News BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS & SERVICE GUIDE

Whatever you're looking for, these local businesses ask you to consider them first.

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PRODUCTION UPGRADE
— On Tuesday, *The Freeport News* took quite an advanced step in technology with an upgrade of its plate making capacity. On Tuesday, the newly installed CTP plate writer machine was utilized. It is a time saving element that covers four phases, necessary with the old system. The CTP processed plate goes directly to the press. At right, *Freeport News* General Manager/Managing Editor Fred Sturup, second from right, sends a page image through the printing control center to the CTP plate writer. Looking on at center is Intergraph technician Carlos Gomez. At right is *Freeport News* Production Manager Howard Grant. Night Editor Barbara Walkin, left, looks on with production pagination specialist Samantha Lewis.



(PHOTO: JAIMIE SMITH)

Belinda Wilson: Four BUT trade disputes remain unresolved

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Of the five trade disputes filed by The Bahamas Union of Teachers (BUT) earlier this year, one has been resolved while the other four remain pending. BUT president Belinda Wilson, told *this daily* in an exclusive interview yesterday.

Wilson, who was on island for union business spoke candidly about the unresolved disputes, which she claimed, educators throughout the country have had to endure for far too long.

Earlier this year the BUT filed five trade disputes, which she noted, last month, had entered into the conciliation phase.

On Tuesday (May 8), Wilson disclosed, "One of the trade disputes was dealing with union's access on school campuses. We were able to resolve that matter. There were two schools that had a challenge (with) in New Providence, in holding meetings with the staff; however, that matter has been resolved.

"It is really an age old matter, but we understood that some of the principals would have gotten together and stated that the union was not to have any meeting on the campus until after 3:00 p.m. That would have been a breach of 8.24 of our Agreement," she explained.

The other matters according to Wilson, dealt specifically with human resource issues. She gave examples, "We had a teacher from Steven Dillard, who was abruptly reassigned to another school; that matter is still active. We have not resolved that as yet.

"The third matter that we had was dealing with the manner in which principals and administrators were mistreating teachers, or even breaching the Agreement or violating teacher's rights, in seven schools throughout The Bahamas," the union president maintained. "Those matters have not yet been resolved."

The other two matters, she said, dealt with trained teachers receiving their back pay.

Sharing why matters are of grave concern for the BUT and the teachers that she represents, Wilson said, "You would note that we have an Agreement for 2013 - 2018 and the final payment for that Agreement is a \$1,000 lump sum payment that should have been paid since September of last year, to all of our members. As we speak, there are about 750 members who have not yet received the \$1,000. That matter is still pending. The perennial, long battle that you all have been hearing about, I believe, since I sat in this chair, is millions of dollars owed to teachers," Wilson claimed.

"If a teacher is hired today, but the teacher is hired under what is called delegated powers or delegated authority, that means that the Permanent Secretary (PS) can hire that teacher under his or her power.

Hypothetically speaking she continued, "If the PS appoints a teacher under delegated authority or powers and \$18,000 is all he or she can approve for their salary, then it means that this teacher is coming in \$7,200 short of the amount that they should start with.

"A lot of times, if you are waiting for a job for several years or you have just come out of the University of The Bahamas, or another university abroad or locally, you are anxious to begin work. Our young people, mostly, decide to begin starting with that in hopes that within a year's time their probation would have ended and then they would receive a confirmation letter, and all of their back pay.

"For example, there is a teacher that came in, in 2009. I am not certain if she came in under delegated powers, but she is teaching on the island of Eleuthera. At present, they owe her up to April or May of last year, \$139,000-plus," Wilson claimed.

"That is the difference be-

EXCLUSIVE



BELINDA WILSON
Bahamas Union of Teachers, President

tween what she is making now and what she should have been making, nine years ago," maintained Wilson.

"Those are real issues ... we keep saying that it should not have to take nine, 10, 12 years, for a teacher to be able to receive his or her correct salary. We are not asking for anything extra or for anything new, all we are saying is pay the teacher his or her salary for a fair day's work that they have already given."

Alleging that there are other teachers who have been disen-

franchised as a result of not receiving salaries owed to them, Wilson maintained that a few of their homes have already been taken away, "repossessed by the bank, because they are awaiting a confirmation letter. If you do not have a job letter, confirming that you are working, teaching a part of the government's service, you cannot go to a bank. If you do, the first thing, the most basic thing they will ask for is a job letter.

"Those are real issues ... we keep saying that it should not have to take nine, 10, 12 years, for a teacher to be able to receive his or her correct salary. We are not asking for anything extra or for anything new, all we are saying is pay the teacher his or her salary for a fair day's work that they have already given.

"When you hear us talk about still waiting for teachers to be confirmed, after one year, they should have their confirmation letter. They are not on probation anymore, they should have that confirmation letter and their salary should be commensurate with the position that they are holding," said Wilson.

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GIBC paving the 'Tech Hub' path

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GIBC Digital's future in Grand Bahama looks bright, said the company's founder and CEO, Greg Wood, who recently revealed future plans for the company's on-island operations, during a press conference at the Office of the Prime Minister in Grand Bahama.

He explained that GIBC Digital is a digital-transformation facilitator, which means the company helps organizations



automate their manual processes to reduce cost and errors, use their data to make better decisions faster and prevent cyber security threats.

"In short, we make our clients more successful by trans-

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BRIGHT FUTURE — GIBC Digital is expected to pave the way for other tech companies to invest in Grand Bahama's economy and CEO and Founder, Greg Wood said the company's future on Grand Bahama looks bright.

(PHOTO: JENNEVA RUSSELL)