



**MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SMALL ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT**

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June 20, 2018

Ms. Omatie Lyder  
Editor-in-Chief  
Trinidad Express Newspapers Ltd.  
35-37 Independence Square  
Port of Spain

**Re: Jenny, where are you in our time of need?**

Dear Ms. Lyder

Reference is made to an article published by Susan Mohammed on Page 4 of your newspaper on Wednesday June 20, 2018; the title of which is the subject of this letter.

The article alludes to several statements made by the President of the Trinidad and Tobago Nurses Association, Mr. Idi Stuart. These statements are deliberately misleading, untrue and highly mischievous and I therefore thank you for the opportunity to bring the clarity and truth to his statements.

The facts are as follows:

Mr. Stuart indicated in his address to workers at the Fyzabad rally on Tuesday June 19, 2018, that the Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, Senator the Honourable Jennifer Baptiste-Primus, "... *I told the Minister of Labour that the NCRHA (North-Central Regional Health Authority) stopped giving three year contracts (to nurses), for now...*" and states that, "...*What did she say? I have received your concern and hope that it will be resolved quickly.*"

I wish to advise that the Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development received a copy of correspondence from the Trinidad and Tobago Registered Nurses Association on November 2, 2017 which was addressed to the Chief Executive Officer of the NCRHA, Mr. Davlin Thomas on the topic of NCRHA Pool Nurses and signed by Mr. Idi Stuart. This correspondence highlighted several issues by the Association and was also copied to the Minister of Health, the Honourable Mr Terrence Deyalsingh; the International Labour Organisation (Trinidad and Tobago Representative); the President of the International Council of Nurses, Ms Annette Kennedy and the President of the Joint Trade Union Movement, Comrade Ancel Roget.

In keeping with the protocol I adopted upon assumption as Minister which is to acknowledge receipt of all correspondence, as such a letter would have been issued by myself to Mr. Stuart, President to the Association dated November 7, 2017, indicating receipt and stating that "I trust that the issues highlighted would be resolved in the shortest possible time." Please note that no official correspondence was conveyed directly to me as Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development from Mr. Stuart for any issues to be addressed and no subsequent correspondence has been received from the Association to date.

In light of the foregoing, I call upon Mr Idi Stuart to retract his misfounded allegations.

As Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, I remain committed to fulfilling the Government's Mandate and working amicably and assiduously with all stakeholders.

Yours in Service



Jennifer Baptiste Primus

Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development



# MP vows to take back community from criminals... Central residents march against crime

CHAGUANAS  
Kim Boodram  
kim.boodram@trinidadexpress.com

WHILE some marched yesterday for the past and future of the Labour movement, some Central residents instead walked in protest against crime and called on the rest of the nation to take a stand against victimhood.

Led by Caroni Central MP Dr Bhoe Tewarie and joined by Chaguanas Mayor Gopaul Boodhan, over 200 men, women and children trekked from Freeport to Chaguanas yesterday morning as they swore to take their communities back from criminals.

Tewarie, who initiated the People's March Against the Crime Takeover of Trinidad and Tobago, said the walk was kicked off as a plan to protest rising crime and Government inaction not only in Central Trinidad but throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

The walk was shadowed by the Central Division of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS), led by Snr Supt Inraj Balram. Some

of the protesters said many members of the Central Division were very community oriented and committed to duty, but lacked resources.

Tewarie, in the meantime, vowed not to lose Central to crime or "allow criminals to treat constituents as if they are stray dogs in their own community".

"We are not going to allow that, and if we stand together, we will be able to build a formidable community for us to be able to work with the police in a constructive way. We are not going to allow the criminals of this country to invade our homes, our churches, our temples," Tewarie said.

## Work with police

Tewarie said the presence of the TTPS yesterday was a sign that "good" police officers worked in the community, and he called on residents to support the police.

This was echoed by Balram, who also disclosed the police have been getting increased community support.



STANDING UP TO CRIME: A Freeport resident displays a placard during yesterday's march organised by Caroni Central MP Dr Bhoe Tewarie.

"We need the public and the public needs us. We are the public and the people are the police," Balram said.

The TTPS in Central has intensified its outreach and, almost weekly, holds public meetings in individual communities.

Balram said the TTPS's

support for yesterday's march was part of the bigger strategy and also aimed at sensitising the public.

Urging citizens to "be our brother's keeper", Balram reminded the public that the TTPS has launched a number of initiatives to offer support for neighbourhood watch

groups. The police have in nationwide community meetings strongly encouraged the return of neighbourhood watches.

In 2016, a collaboration of the Powerful Ladies of Trinidad and Tobago (PLOTT), Community Defence Services Ltd and TTPS saw the launch

of the mobile app Community Security Awareness For Everyone (CSAFE), a digital version of a neighbourhood watch.

Tewarie noted a spate of break-ins at places of worship around the country in recent weeks and said home invasions in Central have also increased alarmingly.

A number of residents confirmed this, saying the elderly and women who live alone are being targeted.

In addressing the conclusion of the march at the Woodford Lodge Recreation Ground, Tewarie asked: "Will you stand with the police who are cleaning up the place? Are you going to stand against the criminals? Are you going to stand up for yourself? Are you going to be strong and courageous and not allow criminals to overrun your homes, your communities, your churches, your temples, your mosques?"

Tewarie said the next step will be to offer proposals to the relevant authorities on dealing with crime in Central Trinidad.

## Duke wants PM to amend labour laws

SCARBOROUGH  
Elizabeth Williams

PUBLIC Services Association (PSA) president and head of the National Trade Union Centre (Natuc) Watson Duke said he intends to write to Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley, calling on him to amend a number of acts, including the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Act.

Duke made the call yesterday during a Labour Day march in Tobago, the first of its kind to be held. He said: "We intend to write him and say to him, amend the Industrial Relations Act so the lowest of the low would be deemed a worker and the high-

est of the high would be deemed a worker."

Hundreds of workers joined Labour Day celebrations in Tobago, in a historic march which started at Shaw Park, along Old Milford Road, through Scarborough and concluding at James Park.

Duke also called for an industrial court and a family court to be established in Tobago. He then gave this advice to Tobago House of Assembly (THA) Chief Secretary Kelvin Charles, who was present during Labour Day observances at James Park.

"If you really want to succeed in managing Tobago well, treat with the working class."



LABOUR UNITY: PSA president Watson Duke, left, greets THA Chief Secretary Kelvin Charles during yesterday's Labour Day celebrations at James Park, Tobago.  
—Photo: ELIZABETH WILLIAMS

Representing the All Trinidad General Workers Trade Union (ATG-WTU), Mervyn Maharaj said all governments have failed in ensuring the regularisation of Tobago lands are finalised.

"Both the PNM (People's National Movement) and the UNC (United National Congress) have failed to pass the necessary labour legislation to make sure that our people are never again retrenched and

go home without anything in their pockets," Maharaj said.

Calls were made also on the issue of self-governance for Tobago to be settled once and for all from the National Union of Government and Federated Workers (NUGFW) president general James Lambert.

"This PNM Government must give to Tobago and conclude self-government for Tobago. It's taking too damn long," Lambert said.

## Jenny, where are you in our time of need?

AVOCAT  
Susan Mohammed  
susan.mohammed@trinidadexpress.com

JENNY is that you?

This was the question posed to Minister of Labour Jennifer Baptiste-Primus from president of the Trinidad and Tobago Registered Nurses Association Idi Stuart as he expressed his disappointment with issues concerning nurses.

He addressed union members at Avocat Junction, Fyzabad, after yesterday's Labour Day march.

Stuart said he had seen Baptiste-Primus, a former trade unionist who for many years held the post of president of the Public Services Association (PSA), as "one of the heroes in the labour movement".

"She led the PSA with strength and conviction, a champion for the working class", Stuart said. "I told the Minister of Labour that

NCRHA (North-Central Regional Health Authority) stopped giving three-year contracts (to nurses), that they were for six months, and now they not giving contracts at all. We wrote to the Minister of Labour who used to champion the cause and walk the streets. What did she say? I have received your concern and I hope that it will be resolved quickly."

"But, Jenny, we were there for you. Where are you in our time of need? What has happened to you, Jenny? Jenny, have they brainwashed you? Is that you, Jenny?" asked Stuart. "Jenny, have no fear, your day will come, too. Power to the people and the working class."

## Sanitation workers disrespected

Rajkumar - Narinesingh, representing the General Sanitation Workers Union, said the labour of the landfill and sanitation workers was unappreciated and disrespected.

Narinesingh said 200 workers of SWMCOL (Solid Waste Management Company Ltd) manage and dispose of the garbage of approximately one million people in Trinidad and Tobago.

"Of approximately 640,000 workers in our nation, approximately 0.025 per cent work in our nation's landfills. A quarter of a quarter of a per cent takes care of your waste, comrades."

"What is the value of this that goes back to our workers? A work life of poor wages and poor working conditions and a retirement of ill-health, dependency and destitution. That is what awaits our comrades who work in the landfills. We labour for others to exist, but our labour is unappreciated and disrespected."

## Today's Weather

Cloudy with periods of rain or showers in broad areas; showers may become heavy and thundery in a few areas  
(Gusty winds, street and/or flash flooding likely in vicinity of heavy showers and thundershowers.)



Seas:	Moderate	Sunrise:	5:45 a.m.
Waves:	Up to 2 m in open waters, less than 1 m in sheltered areas.	Sunset:	6:29 p.m.
Rainfall:	8 mm	Port of Spain Tides:	
Cumulative:	55.7 mm	High:	9:29 a.m. 10:24 p.m.
		Low:	3:24 a.m. 3:51 p.m.
		Scarborough Tides:	
		High:	9:26 a.m. 10:24 p.m.
		Low:	3:25 a.m. 3:54 p.m.
Maximum Temp:	30°C		
Minimum Temp:	23°C		



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2017, November 7

Mr. Idi Stuart  
President TTRNA 2016-2018  
Trinidad and Tobago Registered Nurses Association  
Professional Centre  
11-13 Fitzblackman Drive South  
Woodbrook  
**Port of Spain**


Dear Mr. Stuart

**RE: NCRHA POOL NURSES**

I acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 2017 to Mr. Davlin Thomas, Chief Executive Officer, North Central Regional Health Authority and copied to myself, the contents of which is duly noted.

I trust that the issues highlighted would be resolved in the shortest possible time.

With kind regards

  
Jennifer Baptiste-Primus  
Minister



## Trinidad and Tobago Registered Nurses Association

- Central Executive -

Established in 1930

Incorporated in Parliament by Act No. 30 of 1980

**Trade Union** Established in July 2014

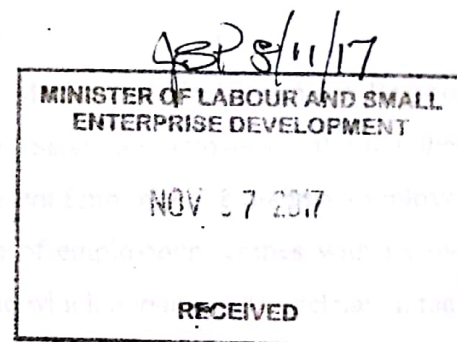
*President: Mr. Idi Stuart*  
*Secretary: Mr. Corey Dillon*  
*Treasurer: Mrs. Joycelyn Clarke*

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TTRNA 375/17

2<sup>nd</sup> November 2017

Mr. Davlin Thomas  
Chief Executive Officer  
North Central Regional Health Authority  
Building 39  
Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex  
Uriah Butler Highway  
Champ Fleurs



Dear Mr. Thomas,

### RE: NCRHA POOL NURSES

The Trinidad and Tobago Registered Nurses Association (TTRNA) condemns in the strongest manner, the NCRHA employing Registered Nurses as 'Pool nurses' or on a 'Continuous Temporary' arrangement. TTRNA expects this practice to come to an immediate stop, and expects the Authority to offer all nursing personnel currently employed within the region Permanent Employment.

Nursing Personnel are key to any well managed healthcare organization, and as such should be treated accordingly. Having nurses employed in these circumstances that the NCRHA has created, causes a demotivated employee.

To date the NCRHA has not provided the TTRNA with the information requested of it via the Freedom and Information Act with regards to the nursing establishment's numbers and vacancies. TTRNA will also be requesting when last the approved establishment was reviewed as the services of the NCRHA has continued to expand.

The Union would have attempted to address the issue of unsafe staffing levels with you since our scheduled January 20th, 2017 meeting at the NCRHA office, which you missed. Written request for a follow-up meeting with you since then have proved futile. I personally would have visited your office recently on the Friday 20th November 2017 to address this worsening crisis, however, you were not in office. Your assistant assured me she will convey my request to meet and treat with this issue, but I have not received any communication from your office. Therefore, let me ensure all ambiguity is removed from what the Union expects.

### **Continuous Temporary**

With regards to Continuous Temporary employment, the Ministry of Health and the Regional Health Authority Human Resource Policy and Guidelines for Salaried Employees, states that there are only four (4) classification of employees. That of Permanent Employee, Temporary Employee, Part-Time Employee, and Contract Employee. Each type of employment comes with its own rational and requirements for offering same. The only one to which nursing personnel can in mass be offered, is that of Permanent Employment.

Considering the length of time nursing personnel have been hired within the NCRHA, further highlights it is was done to fill a full-time position on a permanent basis. Unfortunately, this method of employment does not allow for the employee to contribute to the RHA's pension plan or receive gratuity at the end of their work year. It is our opinion that Continuous Temporary employment is not within the remit of the RHA to offer to employees, and as such the Union will be challenging the legality of every nurse who has been placed on this mode of employment.

### **Pool Nurses**

It is unfathomable that the NCRHA has found it feasible and prudent to offer junior nurses, inexperienced and untested, to employ their services under the pretense of Pool Nurses. To ensure



you are aware of the precarious position the NCRHA have placed these nurses and the Region into, let me state some facts.

1. Pool Nursing is commonly known as extra duty for experienced nurses who have proven to meet the minimum acceptable standards of the employer.
2. All other regions (including the NCRHA until recently) have a minimum six (6) month waiting period, before allowing nurses to work Pool within the institution.
3. This six (6) month window also facilitates the probationary period, where the employee must be supervised, at all times by an experienced staff member.
4. These forty-five (45) new nurses have never worked before, so they are neither experienced or tested.
5. No orientation sessions were done for these new nursing personnel.
6. These nurses have graduated from their respective schools in 2016, having last trained in the clinical setting since April 2016.

It is the TTRNA's view that no nurse ought to work alone on any ward. So, it is even more alarming to the Union, that these junior nurses are placed in positions that they could end up working by themselves. Night shift places a risk of the nurse working alone due to several factors, and as such, these nurses should not be placed on night shift duty during the probationary period.

Working alone places the patient life at risk as well as the new nurse's license in jeopardy of being revoked if they make a mistake. Even placing junior nurses to work with one (1) other RN, is still not acceptable, as the RN not only have to still complete all duties of the ward, but also supervise these junior nurses in the execution of their duties. It is easy to understand the high absenteeism of nurses in the NCRHA, due to burnout.

With no contract, no gratuity, no pension, no vacation, no leave of any kind, no benefits, no indication of how long their services will be needed, it stands to reason that they are filling the role of 'scab labour'. Every aspect of this arrangement violates several International Labour Organization (ILO) principles of the 21 fundamental, governance and technical conventions, which has been ratified by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

It is the Union's hope that the management, takes time to review their own policy on the 'Orientation of Employees'. The damage being caused to these new employees will be difficult to correct in the future, and the employees will have a poor perception of their new employers going forward, carrying out their functions with that concept, foremost in their mind.

This issue is so grave, TTRNA will be including the Minister of Health, Minister of Labour, ILO, International Council of Nurses (ICN) and the President of the Joint Trade Union Movement in this correspondence for their immediate involvement in correcting this life-threatening experiment engaged by the NCRHA. TTRNA will utilize every resource available to it, to have this issue corrected before 2017 ends.

Regards,



**Idi Stuart**

**President TTRNA 2016-2018**



Cc: Honorable Mr. Terrence Deyalsingh, Minister of Health

✓Cc: Honorable Mrs. Jennifer Baptiste-Primus, Minister of Labour

Cc: International Labour Organization (Trinidad and Tobago Representative)

Cc: Annette Kennedy, President - International Council of Nurses

Cc: Comrade Ancel Roget, President - Joint Trade Union Movement