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Doctors Forced to End Strike

BY LEAH COOPER
 Journal Staff Writer

Under Section 76 of the Industrial Relations Act, striking doctors are compelled to return to work as Minister of Labour Dion Foulkes announced yesterday that he has referred the Bahamas Doctors Union's (BDU) dispute to the Industrial Tribunal.

Minister Foulkes said, "Pursuant to Section 76 of the Industrial Relations

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Minister of Labour Dion Foulkes

PHA: 'Extra Demands Made Strike Illegal'

BY DEANDRE WILLIAMSON
 Journal Staff Writer

While the Public Hospitals Authority (PHA) wants junior doctors to return to work, it believes their extra demands made the strike illegal.

Responding a press release issued by the Bahamas Doctors Union (BDU) yesterday, the PHA explained its negotiations with the union and acknowledged that the government agreed to settle the issue over holiday pay.

"The PHA notes that even after meeting with the prime minister, where it was agreed that the entire \$4.98 million owed would be paid over

two installments in September and December of 2019, an even better offer than what the BDU originally requested, the BDU saw fit not to accept this generous offer and end their strike, but instead used the opportunity to make even further demands of the PHA, the Department of Public Health, the Ministry of Health and by extension, the Bahamian people; demands that have no bearing to its strike certificate and as a result, in the opinion of the PHA, turned a legal strike into an illegal one," the PHA said in a statement.

"The BDU has asked

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PHA Calls BDU 'Disingenuous'



BDU President Melisande Bassett

BY LEAH COOPER
 Journal Staff Writer

The Public Hospitals Authority called the Bahamas Doctors Union (BDU) "disingenuous" after it claimed that Minister of Health Dr. Duane Sands "insists" that both parties sign an agreement concerning the deduction of monies owed to doctors.

Yesterday, in a response to the BDU, the PHA said, "After both parties agreed that the amount due to the junior doctors was in fact \$4.98 million, the PHA proposed that the amounts be paid over six semi-annual installments. The BDU countered with a

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'Highest Level of Union Unrest'

BY EARYEL BOWLEG
 Journal Staff Writer

Progressive Liberal Party (PLP) Deputy Leader Chester Cooper called the recent junior doctors' strike and protest by the Bahamas Public Services Union (BPSU) "the high-

est level of union unrest and deterioration of union relation" with the government.

After a ceremony on Monday commemorating former Prime Minister Sir Lynden Pindling's death

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Chester Cooper

PLP REMEMBERS SIR LYNDEN PINDLING



Former Governor General Dame Marguerite Pindling and members of the Progressive Liberal Party laid a wreath at the mausoleum of former Prime Minister Sir Lynden Pindling, commemorating his death 19 years ago. (Photo/Earyel Bowleg)

BY EARYEL BOWLEG
 Journal Staff Writer

It's been 19 years since the death of former Prime Minister Sir Lynden Pindling and yesterday members the Progressive Liberal Party (PLP), along with Pindling's wife Dame Marguerite commemorated his death.

"All I'm asking of you is don't forget him. Look around this Bahamas, you can't help but to remember. No matter where you go," Dame Marguerite said during the ceremony at Pindling's mausoleum at St. Agnes Cemetery.

"We just want to give thanks for his work, his

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ALL THE NEWS YOU NEED TO READ IN THE MORNING

Disney's Lighthouse Point Plan Celebrates Bahamian Culture

BY BERTHONY MCDERMOTT
Journal Staff Writer

Disney Cruise Line Island Development unveiled its plans for what the experience at the \$400 million cruise port and entertainment facility at Lighthouse Point in South Eleuthera will be like.

The unveiling which came at Disney's D23 expo in California on Sunday, according to Disney, will celebrate the culture and spirit of The Bahamas.

At the unveiling, Disney Parks, Experience and Products Chairman Bob Chapek and Walt Disney Imagineer Joe Rohde shared the new details about the plan.

Rhodes said, "The Bahamas offers a fascinating multi-cultural traditions of food, music, dance and storytelling."

He added, "Eleuthera in particular is home to many artists and we will be working with painters, sculptors, writers, storytellers, musicians, weavers and artists of every kind, much like we did with Aulani in

Hawaii, to create a unique experience that is rooted in Bahamian culture and imbued with Disney magic."

Minister of Tourism Dionisio D'Aguilar was on hand for the unveiling and said, "The Bahamas government negotiated a model agreement with Disney- preserving the natural environment of Lighthouse Point and the culture of The Bahamas while growing economic opportunities for Bahamians."

"Disney has done a tremendous job of following through on the commitments it made by taking a thoughtful and comprehensive approach to its environmental impact assessment, engaging directly with the people of South Eleuthera and creative communities and maintaining an open dialogue with civic and business leaders in order to maximize future opportunities for Bahamians," he added.

Disney completed its purchase of the privately owned property earlier this year and signed the heads of agreement with the gov-



► Artist Rendering of Disney's Lighthouse Point Development

ernment back in March.

Disney has committed to developing less than 20 percent of the property, employ sustainable building practices, including an open trestle pier, establish

environmental monitoring programs during construction and operation and donate more than 190 acres of privately owned land to the government, among other commitments.

ments.

Work on the project will only begin after an Environmental Impact Assessment and Environmental Management Plan are

reviewed and accepted by the government and public consultation has occurred.

Construction could begin in 2020 with completion in late 2022 or 2023.



► Aerial View of Disney's planned Lighthouse Point Development

PM Visits BTVI: Promises Family Island Students \$500 for Housing

BY BERTHONY MCDERMOTT
Journal Staff Writer

Prime Minister Dr. Hubert Minnis and other senior government officials toured the Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute (BTVI) yesterday getting a firsthand look at classrooms at the Old Trail Road campus.

Some \$2.6 million have been budgeted towards free tuition for students at BTVI and according to BTVI President Dr. Robert Robinson, registration at the Nassau campus is up some 26 percent in the last two years and 100 percent in Grand Bahama.

Addressing students in attendance, Dr. Minnis told students that he wants them to succeed.

"The only thing I ask of you is that you attend your courses, you study hard and you succeed that's all I want," he said.

"I want to see you all succeed so that when I and my colleague minister

and others depart from this world, we will at least be able to rest in peace knowing that we left The Bahamas in great hands."

Family Island students attending the University of The Bahamas will receive an allowance of \$500 for their living accommodations.

Dr. Minnis informed students that BTVI students will receive the same benefit.

"I have spoken with the financial secretary and I would have asked the president to provide us with the number of students attending BTVI from the Family Islands so that they too can receive the same benefits as those at the University of The Bahamas," Dr. Minnis explained.

"Now let me get something straight to you, the \$500 is not given to you to put in your pocket. The \$500 as you are encouraged to live in family homes and rental facilities, the \$500 is given to

the landlord."

BTVI President Dr. Robert Robertson said the grant to Family Island students will make a significant difference to students in the future.

"It will make an impact in the future, but I think families and children make decisions earlier and so they are already here because they already made the decision based on the fact that they were not eligible at BTVI," Dr. Robertson said.

"So I think next year it will make a big difference. A lot of people think about coming, but then the housing cost added to everything else in a bigger city is just too much.

"I talked to some parents last week about it and like I said, they make their decisions earlier, but the next year I think they will be here in numbers."

According to BTVI, out of the 2,500 students this term some 70 of them are Family Island students.



► Prime Minister Minnis addressed students on the first day of classes Monday, August 26, 2019 at Bahamas Technical & Vocational Institute, Old Trail Road. Also shown are BTVI's President, Dr. Robert W. Robertson and Lorraine Armbrister, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education. (BIS Photos/Yontalay Bowe)



Doctors Forced

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Act, I have considered that the strike action taken as a result of the strike certificate issued on the 19th December, 2018 relative to a trade dispute filed on the 25th September, 2018 concerning the issue of the employer's failure to pay employees' holiday pay in

accordance with the Industrial Agreement and the Employment Act, has affected and threatened the public interest."

In accordance with the Employment Act, Mr. Foulkes added that all parties have been notified in writing.

The referral of the dispute to the Industrial

Tribunal followed the cancellation of a meeting at the Department of Labour geared towards bringing an end to the matter.

Director of Labour John Pinder said the meeting was called off by BDU President Dr. Melisande Bassett.

"I had a conversation with the president of the

doctors union and she indicated that her attorney had advised her that there is some clause in the proposal coming from the prime minister that we were supposed to discuss this morning, as it relates to the holiday pay, if she signs off on that it will become null and void," Mr. Pinder said.

"So, she didn't wish to continue the meeting."

As the junior doctors' strike continued into sixth day on Monday, the BDU has increased its demands.

Initially, outstanding holiday pay was at the crux of their grievances, but now the new demands range from increased

health insurance to a request for Crown land.

However, Mr. Pinder told The Bahama Journal that he is not aware of those requests.

He said, "I didn't see the proposal from the prime minister to them. I was supposed to review that this morning before the meeting got started."

PHA Calls BDU 'Disingenuous'

Continued from / PAGE 1...

request for a repayment period of four semi-annual installments.

"The PHA advised the BDU that its financial position would not allow for the repayment to be shortened to four installments but in the spirit of compromise, agreed to meet the BDU half-way by proposing a repayment over five installments. This offer was extended to the BDU in June of 2019 but to-date, the BDU has refused to accept the compromise and instead made the decision to strike on August 21st,

2019.

"The PHA finds it totally disingenuous of the BDU to give the Bahamian public the perception that the Minister of Health is now attempting to "insist" that they sign an agreement that deducts an amount that is due them."

On Monday, BDU announced that it's continuing to exercise its legal right to utilize industrial action against the Public Hospitals Authority (PHA) and the Department of Public Health.

In a release, the union reiterated that it has taken 10 years of failed negotia-

tions to reach this point.

The BDU added that it demonstrated restraint and held off industrial action for eight months attempting to conclude this matter amicably, considering its impact on the public.

According to the release, in the union's efforts toward conciliation it has conceded six years of holiday pay, which extends back to 2010.

This accounts for money owed in excess of \$10 million.

The BDU added that it realized the financial burden this posed on the public's purse and made

numerous concessions.

These include reducing the money payout to less than half, waiving all interest to the money owed and giving the government options for non-monetary alternatives like the construction of a parking garage, improved insurance or one-time tax waivers.

The BDU explained that the government has acknowledged that the junior doctors are owed for working public holidays over the past ten years and made provisions for the funds to be paid.

However, the union

claimed that it has not been able to sign an agreement with Minister of Health Dr. Duane Sands because he insists that he is entitled to make deductions from those funds.

The union added that it has been advised by its legal advisor that it would be foolish to agree to such a deduction as this would be contrary to what is constitutionally allowed.

Additionally, the BDU said current government provisions will not bring what is owed current and no agreement has been made as to how holiday pay will be addressed in the future.

The release explained that the union has expressed to Dr. Sands on numerous occasions that the members of the BDU are ready to get back to work, but can only do so when there is a legal binding and fair document to sign, a timeline to resolve to the other outstanding issues and all of the money agreed to by Prime Minister Dr. Huber Minnis is paid to the junior doctors.

The BDU added that the inconvenience and frustration that the public is experiencing lies "square at the feet of the minister of health".

PLP REMEMBERS SIR LYNDEN

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witness, the passion he showed for his people. He's still showing it through his people. I think that's why we're all here today - we're feeling his presence."

Joining the ceremony were PLP Chairman Fred Mitchell and Deputy Leader Chester Cooper

and Bishop Arnold Josey.

"You should never ever forget. I pray that the Bahamas never ever forget, no matter who the young people come up behind. Those of you don't know that struggle. You don't know that story," Josey said.

Cooper took time to thank Dame Marguerite for her service to the country.

"Let me say how grateful the nation is for you having served as governor general with class and distinction and the nation is forever grateful too. The Progressive Liberal Party is grateful to you and we thank you entirely," Cooper said.

"It is important for us to always celebrate the life and time of Sir Lynden. He's a man who

has sacrificed his life and given of himself all that he had at a very young age, made sacrifices of himself, his family, his money and all that he could give to liberate the Bahamian people."

Mitchell announced PLP's plan to commemorate Sir Lynden if the PLP is elected as government in the next general election.

"We are committed to declaring Sir Lynden the father of the nation. We are committed to a triple sized statue on the hill overlooking the harbour of the Botanical Gardens. To that the people will know this is the man who created, who championed the modern Commonwealth of The Bahamas and who stood up for the people of

African descent," Mitchell said.

While alive, Sir Lynden served as prime minister of the Bahamas for nearly 26 years. He led the country to independence from Great Britain and served as a member of the House of Assembly for 41 consecutive years.

Today, he would have been 89 years old.

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BREEF Releases "A Quick Guide to Fisheries Regulations of The Bahamas"



► BREEF presented 1000 copies of "A Quick Guide to Fisheries Regulations of The Bahamas" pocket brochures to Department of Marine Resources and Royal Bahamas Defence Force Photo: (L-R) Assistant Commander Operations, Commander Chapell Whymms, Captain Coral Harbour, Captain Adrian Chriswell (back), Allison Ballester-Longley, BREEF Outreach & Education Officer, Casuarina McKinney-Lambert, Executive Director, BREEF, Commander Defence Force, Commodore Tellis A. Bethel, Kevin Ginton, Education Coordinator, BREEF, Commander Operations and Airwing Commanding Officer, Commander Shonedel Pinder, Assistant Base Supply Officer, Senior Lieutenant Elvis Bullard and Legal Affairs Officer, Lieutenant Commander Floyd Moxey

The Bahamas Reef Environment Educational Foundation (BREEF) is thrilled to begin the official distribution of the pocket brochures, "A Quick Guide to Fisheries Regulations of The Bahamas." The brochure was made possible with the assistance of Family Island Research and Education, the Department of Marine Resources and the Royal Bahamas Defence Force. The brochure is developed by BREEF to provide fishers with a handy pocket reference to Protected Species Regulations, Approved Fishing Methods and Fishing Permit Requirements.

Accepting the

brochures on behalf of the Department of Marine Resources, Acting Director of Fisheries, Mr. Edison Deleveaux said, "The Department of Marine Resources is appreciative of the assistance provided by the NGO community, and in particular those provided by the Bahamas Reef Environment Educational Foundation (BREEF). BREEF's recent production of the brochure, "A Quick Guide to the Fisheries Regulations of The Bahamas", assists greatly in the provision of information to stakeholders with the aim of educating persons to fish responsibly. The ultimate goal is food security. I extend my thanks to

BREEF for this initiative."

In his remarks at the Coral Harbour Royal Bahamas Defence Force Base, Commodore Tellis Bethel said, "The Royal Bahamas Defence Force congratulates BREEF for its publication of the Quick Guide to Fisheries Regulations of The Bahamas Brochure. This booklet provides a practical tool for understanding Bahamian fisheries laws, and therefore makes the Defence Force's role in safeguarding our fisheries resources a much easier one. Knowledge of these laws is also important for our growing population, as well as visitors to our shores. We in the Defence Force will certainly make

use of this booklet and will encourage others to do the same."

Casuarina McKinney-Lambert, BREEF's Executive Director stated, "A Quick Guide to Fisheries Regulations of The Bahamas is first and foremost an educational tool designed to promote responsible and sustainable harvesting of our fishery resources. It is an integral part of BREEF's ongoing efforts to provide as many fishers as possible with access to some very important Bahamian Fisheries Regulations. Additionally, fishers can also obtain similar information by downloading the Fish Rules App which BREEF helped to devel-

op."

BREEF is confident that "A Quick Guide to Fisheries Regulations of The Bahamas" pocket brochure will continue to be a valuable reference tool for promoting responsible fishing practices and adherence to fisheries regulations by Bahamian and visiting fishers.

According to BREEF's Outreach and Education Officer, Allison Ballester-Longley, "BREEF is very grateful to Mr. Stevie Connett of Family Island Research and Education and Bahamas Sea Turtle Research for facilitating the production of the new brochures. And, we would like to remind

everyone that responsible fishers, know and obey fisheries regulations, respect closed seasons, respect the rules of Marine Protected Areas and purchases only legally and sustainably harvested seafood."

BREEF is a non-governmental nonprofit Bahamian foundation concerned with educating our people about the value of and need for conserving our marine environment. BREEF promotes the conservation of the Bahamian marine environment that sustains our way of life. Persons interested in obtaining a copies of the brochure can contact BREEF at 327-9000 or email: breef@breef.org

PHA: 'Extra Demands

Continued from / PAGE 1...

that their holiday pay be settled. The government has agreed to this. It is time for them to get back into the hospitals and the clinics and render much needed service to the Bahamian people."

In addition to their holiday pay, the doctors' demands range from increased health insurance to a request for Crown land for the construction of a BDU office.

According to the list of new demands, the BDU wants a timeline and agreement on one of its non-monetary compensation options as proposed in its communique on March 7, 2019.

The non-monetary compensation options include an increase in the current health insurance benefits of junior doctors so that it would be on par

with police and immigration officers.

Other non-monetary compensation options call for the construction of a paid parking facility on the hospital grounds for public use and tax exemptions.

Approximately eight months ago, the PHA and the BDU entered into discussions concerning the settlement of holiday pay and both parties negotiated in good faith during that period.

According to the PHA, one of the major points discussed between the parties were "the means of independently verifying each junior doctor engaged in providing services on each of the 47 holidays incurred during the period in question".

The other two points included the "identification of the number of hours each junior doctor engaged in providing

service on each holiday and the number of installments over which the ultimate agreed compensation amount would be paid".

The PHA explained that as there were no means of identifying each junior doctor or the specific number of hours worked each holiday due to junior doctors not utilizing the swipe system, it recommended, and the BDU agreed to accept a payout that applied an across-the-board settlement to all junior doctors employed by the PHA.

"Under this arrangement, holiday pay compensation would be based on length of service during the period under review, rather than actual hours worked on holidays by each junior doctor," the PHA statement read.

"On completion of the analysis by the PHA, it

was determined that on average, the PHA required the Full Time Equivalent (FTE) of 108 junior doctors to work over the course of a 24-hour period on a holiday. After some back and forth between the PHA and the BDU, the BDU ultimately agreed that the PHA's assessment was in fact correct. Using this information, along with the hourly base rate paid to junior doctors, the PHA calculated the full cost to engage the services of 108 junior doctors at double time to be \$5.97 million."

The PHA recognized, however, that while the full cost amounted to \$5.97 million gross, each junior doctor would have received in their pay packages each month where a holiday fell, a portion of their double pay in the form of eight hours of base pay, which

covered the initial eight hours of work they engaged in during their required 24-hour shift.

"The value of the first eight hours of work for each junior doctor over the 47 holidays incurred accumulated to \$995,708. Given the fact that this amount had already been paid to the junior doctors over the period in question, the PHA advised the BDU that this amount needed to be deducted from the gross figure of \$5.97 million, resulting in a net payable of \$4.98 million," the PHA explained.

"This explanation was provided to the BDU and was accepted by them by way of a letter dated May 14th, 2019. The PHA finds it totally disingenuous of the BDU to give the Bahamian public the perception that the Minister of Health is now attempting to 'insist' that

they sign an agreement that deducts an amount that is due them.

"After both parties agreed that the amount due to the junior doctors was in fact \$4.98 million, the PHA proposed that the amounts be paid over six semi-annual installments. The BDU countered with a request for a repayment period of four semi-annual installments. The PHA advised the BDU that its financial position would not allow for the repayment to be shortened to four installments, but in the spirit of compromise, agreed to meet the BDU half-way by proposing a repayment over five installments. This offer was extended to the BDU in June of 2019 but to-date, the BDU has refused to accept the compromise and instead made the decision to strike on August 21st, 2019."

'Highest Level of Union Unrest'

Continued from / PAGE 1...

at his mausoleum, Cooper said the matter called for discussions with both parties.

"This level of unrest will not continue if the government were to

approach it in matter that would make sense to the Bahamian people," Mr. Cooper said.

"I believe there's something to be said about the ability to sit down and have sensible conversation, to listen to

the Bahamian people, to understand their needs, to present yourself in good faith and fairness and really have a line of open communication where everyone understands the circumstances."

He added that the Minnis administration is on its "high horses and happy being the government," but its members are not recognizing they were elected to look out for the people, instead of serving their best inter-

est.

Last week, junior doctors at the Princess Margaret Hospital removed all non-essential services and only emergency staff remained on the job after not receiving their holi-

day pay from the Public Hospitals Authority.

Following the strike, hundreds of BPSU members protested outside Cabinet office hoping to meet with the prime minister concerning their outstanding holiday pay.