



CALL ELECTIONS NOW!

Within the last few months the National Health Workers Union (NHWU) has been in turmoil. The growth and strength of this Union was disturbing to a clique who seek personal monetary gain before service to their fellow workers.

The National Workers Union (NWU) believes it is critical that health workers MUST make their voices heard loudly now. Your union dues deducted for the month of December were not delivered to your union's headquarters in Barataria, but were intercepted and redirected to another office by a person purporting to be the General Secretary

Steps to correct this have been initiated. Letters were sent to the CEO's of SWRHA and NCRHA and other measures are being undertaken. Notwithstanding these efforts YOU the members must take a stand on how your union is led.

After the last PSA election Nigel Small and a few workers of the NCRHA sought representation from the NWU. Discussions dissuaded them from this path and instead it was decided that health workers should be organized in their own union. On June 25th 2014, the NHWU was registered.

HANDFUL OF MEMBERS

It was not satisfactory that the national executive of the union should come from one branch and be elected by five people, but it could not be helped. NCRHA was the only existing branch at the time and there was just a handful of members! These positions, of course, were considered interim until such time as the broad membership could elect its leadership.

To build a union from scratch is a humongous task. A new union would have no office, no full time staff, no ability to employ lawyers or other advisers or to undertake research. Understanding this, an affiliation agreement was signed with the NWU.

The NWU provides human, financial and material resources, technical expertise in terms of organising, industrial relations services (grievance handling; collective bargaining), training, education, research, printing and publications, communication

and media services. The NWU provides office facilities; secretarial and administrative support; maintains a membership records data base and maintains the union accounts.

But the membership at NCRHA made very minimal increase up to August 2015. Not a single grievance was ever processed with the Management of NCRHA. On February 8th 2015 Nigel Small submitted his resignation to the General Secretary Dave Smith and also to the Secretary of the national committee Ms Kemba Quash.

In October 2014, NHWU began to organise in SWRHA and membership climbed to over 300 by August 2015. Based on the affiliation agreement, twenty-four grievances in San Fernando, Point Fortin, and Princes Town have been handled.

This includes at least 5 matters being sent to the Ministry of Labour with one being resolved in the worker's favour while making sure the Occupational Health and Safety Agency got involved with an unresolved issue of a toilet facility at the Cardiac Ward.

DEMONSTRATIONS

We actively supported demonstrations in Port of Spain, San Fernando, Couva and Point Fortin. Health workers from SWRHA and two others from NCRHA were organized to be present at the Labour Day celebrations in Fyzabad.

Hundreds of extracts from the RHA Act and the IRA were researched and produced to inform and educate workers on the inability of the PSA to gain Recognised Majority Union status that could lead to a Collective Agreement like their daily-paid co-workers.

Thousands of bulletins, flyers and 4 **SWRHA TODAY** newsletters were printed; a Facebook page was maintained until it was hijacked by the clique. Numerous media releases, letters to past and present Prime Ministers, Health Ministers and Finance Ministers were issued; various meetings with the CEO, HR and other Management personnel were held with workers' representatives always present; scores

of department meetings were held throughout SWRHA and mass texts and emails were sent to members, all in an effort to keep them informed and to sensitise the public. Two training sessions were conducted, Branch meetings were held and numerous visits were made to non-SFGH areas such as the Couva facility, Claxton Bay Health centre, Princes Town, Siparia and Point Fortin.

Since August last year attempts have been made to structure SWRHA as a functioning Branch; an election exercise was done and the medical orderlies elected shop-stewards Andy Acosta and Anthero Durham. With the rise in membership Andy Acosta resigned as a member on August 22nd 2015.

All, attempts at laying the foundation for a union based on democratic principles were sabotaged by persons seeking to have personal control of NHWU. They preferred to have persons not employed by SWRHA selecting the leadership of the SWRHA branch. Kern Webb and Andy Acosta never faced the electorate but were simply chosen by one man to be on the national executive.

AFFILIATE

The NHWU and the National Aviation Workers Union are both affiliate unions to the National Workers Union. All three unions share common expenses – rent, utilities (phone, electricity, internet etc.), equipment maintenance, database maintenance, wages of clerical staff, etc.

All research, labour relations tasks (interviewing the aggrieved and witnesses, preparing statements of case, researching applicable principles and precedents, attending meetings with HR and the Ministry of Labour etc.); preparation of documentation (researching, writing, editing and paste up etc.) for publication and other services are supplied free of charge by NWU personnel.

Previously, with all other unions, the entire union dues provide services outlined above, The NWU, to assist in developing the NHWU, agreed via the affiliation agreement on 95% of dues to cover common expenses and the remaining 5% to help in the development of the Union.

Dave Smith, in conformity with the affiliation

agreement, the General Secretary of both affiliates and the NWU presented, at a SWRHA Branch meeting on August 29th, the income and expenditure statement, copies of bank records, copies of cancelled cheques representing all monies received from SWRHA. Membership has remained static at the NCRHA and to date it is just around 50 members.

The NWU is committed to providing audited financial statements for its affiliates, as any credit union or publicly listed company on the stock exchange, at the end of the financial year no later than the end of February 2016. These accounts will be submitted to an external auditor appointed by the Registrar of Trade Unions. While all this is going on, attempts to structure the SWRHA Branch were sabotaged by a handful of persons. They will only succeed if members remain bystanders to the destruction or hijacking of their union.

The NWU, therefore as part of its responsibility under the affiliation agreement, calls for a **free and fair election process for the SWRHA branch, with the appointment of an independent election committee whose responsibility would be to ensure that all members throughout SWRHA including those on shift, those in the health centres, Area Hospitals and extended care facilities can participate.**

ELECTION EXERCISE

The election exercise must involve the publication of a listing of members entitled to vote, posted in enough time so that members could scrutinise the list for omissions and corrections; a properly advertised nomination period and procedures for nomination; a widely-advertised explanation on how the elections would be carried out, where ballot boxes would be placed and how they would be handled; how the non-SFGH members would be accommodated; the recruitment of poll clerks etc.

The decision as to who should represent and lead their union is one for all health workers to make. Indeed the NWU had prepared and distributed a draft proposal on this process for discussion but personal ambitions by a few derailed this democratic exercise.

**YOU MUST DECIDE YOUR FATE!
DEMAND PROPER ELECTIONS NOW!**