

John Cumberbatch Memorial Lecture - 25th October, 2000
Facing The Challenge Of Educational Reform

Delivered by

Patrick Frost

I feel deeply honoured to have been invited to deliver the John Cumberbatch Memorial Lecture this year. It is always a matter of honour to be deemed worthy of an invitation to deliver a lecture, but that distinction becomes all the greater when one recognises that this annual lecture is associated with the memory of someone who resides at the very core of the psyche of the Barbados Union of Teachers. I count the invitation as a special privilege since it is an opportunity that will not be given to many and it will come to the fortunate few but once in a life time.

John, as we know, had a passion to reform, but an equal fire not to permit the wrong type of change to be visited upon us. I hope that in sharing my few thoughts this evening on some aspects of educational reform with his colleagues, close friends and family I shall be able to do justice to his memory by saying something, which even if not new, may prove to have been said differently.

When Cobin Hinds spoke to me about the lecture he mentioned that the theme for Teachers' Week was "Facing the Challenge of Educational Reform", and I took this to mean that I was expected to aim in that general direction. I also took it to mean that he was giving me some implicit licence to wander. Those who know me know that I keep a few sheep. Those who know sheep know their influence on those who keep them. If I ramble, therefore, blame my sheep and not Cobin Hinds.

It is axiomatic that educational reform does not take place in a vacuum. It arises out of and is driven by a response to some internal or external stimulus more so than by reformation for the sake of reformation.

What then are these educational reforms which we should identify? In what philosophical or other context must they be seen? How many of them arise from true innovation as opposed to the satisfaction of our obligations to others? How many of them are genuinely worthwhile? What is their individual and collective challenge to us?

It is easy to answer the first question. There are many reforms which are immediately before us - teacher appraisal, the reform of the curriculum, the allied changes to the examination system, including national certification and CAPE, the reform of educational institutions, the reform of the legislation applicable to public officers, the reform of those organisations representing teachers....One could go on, but I have been allotted just one six ball over.

It will no doubt have been observed that I have already drifted beyond what takes place in the classroom to what may determine who takes a place in the classroom to teach and what kind of place it may be for them.

But let me in marking out my run up first indulge in some Frostian pseudo philosophy and try to fit structured change into some general theoretical framework.

It has been said that in life the only constant factor is change. There is little debate on the accuracy of such a statement. There is perhaps more debate on which changes represent improvement, and as we consider the challenges of the reforms to which I have just alluded it may be helpful to place them in the context of two premises.

First, that man is fallible and the extent of the potential for imperfection manifests itself in what he actually does. The level of imperfection in the educational system and elsewhere is well known to all of us and thus leads us to the second premise. Namely, that the existence of such imperfection automatically justifies an attempt at change and any reform proposed is intended to reduce the level of observable imperfection.

So far so good with the theory.

But we must of necessity also register that reform itself has two inter-related components - its conceptualisation or its theoretical basis and its subsequent process of implementation. Both are subject to the potential imperfections to which I have just referred and the existence of a deficiency in either component may ensure failure, perhaps even to the point of making matters worse.

Let my first ball be at teacher appraisal.

I believe that there are few, even among the less than perfect ones within the teaching profession, who cannot see the inherent value in a system of formative teacher appraisal. If its underlying purpose is to make someone more competent, more efficient, more valued and valuable in a job, which by definition seeks to develop another human being, then can one who is employed solely to do that very job reasonably oppose that abstraction? Surely not.

However, all appraisal requires a process, an evaluation of observable and measurable fact and therein lies the potential for danger. A failure to follow the process is an automatic deviation from a reasonable expectancy; a failure to record pertinent fact or to assess fairly what has been gathered will wreck the exercise for the individual involved, cast doubt and fear in the minds of other colleagues, and suspicion in the minds of those further afield who receive reports second or third hand. Add speculation about motive and one is well on the way to conflict.

The challenge within teacher appraisal is for every single teacher, and, by extension, those who represent teachers, to anticipate and neutralise the imperfections in the implementation stage and so ensure the success of something which, theoretically, should be of benefit to teacher and taught alike.

If this means that the organisations representing teachers must undertake the training which should have been done by the agents of the employer, then so be it - that must be counted as part of the challenge.

Yet let us not confuse this type of appraisal with the residual rights of management to examine the suitability and competence of workers and to make such judgements about them as it sees fit. That, too, requires the implementation of a process and any failures therein carry a different type of implication for management.

In addition, let us recognise that if management is disposed to hang, then it is not part of the process for those who represent teachers to provide the rope and to tie the noose around a neck. The challenge there, of course, is for a teacher to be able to stick his neck out for the right reasons, but to have been previously educated how to avoid the noose.

To my second ball - curriculum reform.

There is nothing new in the former. It is an on-going process where educational institutions have historically sought to respond to changes in society or in the labour market. It is in a sense part of social engineering.

However, current curriculum reform has assumed different proportions because for the first time the choices of what subjects to include as part of a core curriculum, what options to provide and at what age, and what weighting to give them within a timetable, all coincide with a technological revolution, a revolution which, lest it be forgotten, is about making money. The relative strengths of the likes of Microsoft on the stock markets provide us with ample evidence. Bill Gates is not among the wealthiest men on earth by chance.

The old adage remains true - knowledge is power and real power in today's material world lies in the capacity to make money by ostensibly purveying knowledge.

Society is clamouring for teachers to add more and still more to what they do, and persuasive cases are made out for the addition of studies in tourism, environmental appreciation, substance abuse, HIV/AIDS education, trade unionism, to mention but a few. CXC demands more and more content in each subject, and the technology salesmen proffer their software and hardware here there and everywhere claiming to make teaching and learning all the easier.

There is a temptation, understandable enough, for any central education authority - in our case the Ministry of Education reflecting the policy of the party of the day - not to leave certain matters to chance and hence the practice of prescribing not merely what the teacher is supposed to teach, but also the very details of how it is to be done.

Such an approach, laudable though it may appear to be, runs counter to the concept of academic freedom in the hands of teachers to select, according to their professional judgement, the best methods to satisfy generally agreed goals and objectives - including the rejection at times of the much vaunted technological tool.

The challenge then in the wave of the current thrust to make technology available to all will be to extract what has its place and to discard what is superfluous. Teachers must insist on not having something sold to them. They must be educated to buy what they need. The distinction between the two actions is not one of semantics since the latter transaction is the precursor to the act of creation for others to purchase. This is where, in my view, the training in information technology should lead.

Indeed, the Ministry of Education is to be applauded for its initiatives in trying to encourage Barbadian teachers to produce indigenous software. The challenge in that direction is as wide as the scope of our collective imagination. Teachers have a never-to-be-repeated opportunity to influence the use of technology in Barbados and the rest of the Caribbean. The potential for financial reward should, of course, not be overlooked.

It is perhaps at this juncture relevant to mention one of the many facets of globalisation. I refer to the World Trade Organisation - Negotiations of Services (GATS).

It is proposed that, in time, education will become the subject of negotiations

and the Government of Barbados will have to provide commitments. While it may be true that WTO may not determine educational policy issues at the domestic policy level, its very existence and its attendant practices in other service sectors will nevertheless exert influence.

The Ministry of Education, in response to correspondence from the BSTU to ascertain the state of any such negotiations, has advised that the Government has not yet developed a position regarding trade in education services. The Ministry proposes, however, to establish a public/private sector committee to review the relevant issues. It is essential that the unions representing teachers should anticipate membership of such a committee and prepare

themselves to influence the work of that committee and thus the negotiating stance of the Government.

According to EI education currently has the lowest number of commitments of any sector under GATS and among the highest number of limitations. It is only a matter of time before that changes. Indeed, EI also reports that the US Department of Labour, apart from requesting that the teaching profession be added to the list of professions covered by NAFTA, has allowed the Chicago school district to recruit internationally for teachers in mathematics, science and foreign languages.

It is true that such opportunities may benefit some Barbadian teachers, but we must be careful to ensure that any gaps left by those who leave our shores will be adequately filled. All this has serious implications for manpower planning in Barbados in general and training in the education sector in particular.

According to recent literature from EI both Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago have already signified their commitments in respect of certain educational services. We in Barbados should seek to learn from the experiences of any consultative process in Jamaica and Trinidad.

But let me resume my run up to the ball I was delivering at curriculum reform.

The teachers in the primary schools have a special responsibility and opportunity since the current curriculum reform exercise begins within their domain. They will have to fly the flag at the first sign of danger; they will have to ensure that the imperfections are spotted and rectified so that they do not become cumulative. Those at the secondary level, though they will have their own responsibilities in time, will be the beneficiaries of the vigilance and professionalism at the primary level.

The specific challenge here for teachers is that, in spite of its imperfections, they must make curriculum reform work for the benefit of Barbadian students.

And so to the third ball.

Changes in an examination system go hand in glove with any curriculum reform.

The revised method of calculating scores upon which a transfer is to take place from primary to secondary school will impose new obligations upon the teachers involved in the process. We all know before we start that there will be accusations of subjectivity, favouritism, mark fixing and the like.

The greatest protection against these attacks will lie in a demonstration of the highest professionalism. Let not the potential for imperfection become reality and so give succour to those who would detract from the efforts of teachers.

Much surprise has been exhibited within the community at the number of Barbadian students who leave school without any academic certification. Teachers have, of course, been represented in some quarters as the rogues of the piece and have been vilified. However, there can be no surprise either to those who know that the CXC examinations were designed for fewer than one third of the entire Caribbean school population or to those in the trenches who register on a daily basis the absence of reciprocity of effort in the classroom.

Notwithstanding the foregoing it is praiseworthy that an attempt is being made through national certification to establish a system whereby all students can earn a credit rating on a wide range of

school related activities. I alluded earlier to the possible failures of reform consequent upon flawed implementation. The obligations upon teachers in this regard are obvious.

CAPE is a logical development by CXC. Its introduction is to be welcomed, even if there are still concerns about what is being imposed upon teachers and students. I am of the view that the existence of single modules in several subjects will provide an opportunity to fifth form students who return to school, particularly those in schools without sixth forms, to use that year more beneficially by attempting an additional course of study.

Those who teach in the newer secondary schools should, in my view, have long ago had the scope to develop a sixth form. The four schools with sixth forms all had modest numerical beginnings and the denial to others of such development over the decades has been an unfortunate discrimination which, in part, has contributed to the public's perceptions of some secondary schools. Moreover, it has added to the pressures attendant upon the transfer process from primary schools.

Teachers in all fifth form schools should insist on having this chance of a new departure, particularly where the BCC has publicly admitted its inability to satisfy demand.

But neither curriculum reform nor different examination systems will amount to anything if they do not take place in an ordered environment where people know their place and are put in their place when they do not know it. I refer, of course, to the rising tide of disordered thinking and indisciplined behaviour that characterises so much of our school life - where teachers are forced to spend an ever increasing volume of time on supervision as opposed to direct instruction or facilitating the gaining of knowledge. It is ironic that a time when more money in real terms is being provided for education that disruptive elements hold the sway that they do.

My earliest recollections of the expression "Boy, know yuh place" are not associated with any preordained status or of a rigid social order, but with an expectancy that persons should have a sense of propriety, should have an understanding of the fitness of things.

How must teachers ensure that their charges know place? It is not enough, to my mind, for teachers to be expected to find the time within their subject areas to inculcate those moral and other values which are the bedrock of a civilised community. There must be provision within the formal timetable for this aspect of schooling to be tackled in a structured way. A true knowledge of place informs our attitudes in every sphere of activity - from loyalty to highest principle to being punctual for work.

The challenge to ensure a return to a previous status quo rests squarely within the individual and collective grasp of the island's teachers. Granted that achievement may be easier said than done, but history will not be kind in its judgement if imperfection is allowed to continue to multiply. None of us will be around to argue, let alone justify, the retreat from an obvious responsibility. The issue, then, is an implementation of "how" not "why".

To my next ball.

Notice of an intention to reform some of the post secondary educational institutions is already public knowledge. How will the functions of the BCC, SJPP and Erdiston be fused? What will all that betoken for training for the lowly teacher and the would-be teacher?

The suspension of the In-Service Diploma in Education courses this year will have prevented approximately 30 teachers from earning 2 additional increments. An immediate challenge, of course, is to get back what has been lost.

However, with this ball my speculative aim is at the middle stump not just removing the off bail. I refer to the possible implications of such institutional reform for the salary structures in the school system.

Those who know the history of salary scales in the older secondary schools are aware that up to the 1940s there were differentials between schools even though teachers had the same qualifications and experience. Even up to the period 1956 -1961 there were still 7 different salaries paid to the headteachers of secondary schools with several grades in the primary schools and two scales for graduates plus permutations for males and females in the last two cases. It took years of relentless argument to produce a system where salary was not determined by either gender or place of work.

The 1969 strike by the BSTU settled the issue of the principle upon which the payment of salaries was made in the teaching profession - the principle was accepted that salary should be based on qualifications and experience. The BSTU conceded as part of the settlement that it would not object to those at the BCC being given an "institutional edge", something quantified by a limited number of increments on a notionally extended graduate scale.

That was all well and good at a time when the BCC was offering little more than Advanced Level and other courses of similar equivalency. However, the BCC is in law empowered to confer degrees - something I personally regard as an error of judgement of major proportions since I am of the view that the sole degree awarding institution in Barbados should be the University of the West Indies. I am of the further opinion that it is unfortunate, to put it euphemistically, that the UWI would not or could not, and certainly did not, treat technology and fine arts as priorities long ago within its programme of expansion and development.

The reality is that the BCC has now moved beyond Associate Arts Degrees to a full degree in Fine Arts. This phenomenon imposes something of a dilemma since those who are teaching at full degree level can reasonably expect to claim remuneration on par with the other degree awarding institution in Barbados. Yet they have colleagues at the BCC at the opposite end of the academic spectrum who will do beginners' classes in a foreign language a few doors away. These members of staff may or may not have identical academic qualifications and experience, but how do their salaries and other conditions of service square with those who teach degree courses?

More to the point - how will the salaries of the latter group relate to those who teach in schools and who may do work of much the same level of complexity and with more contact hours and with all the other time encumbrances associated with a school environment?

If those who teach full degree courses at the BCC are given increases in keeping with their new found status, and if their colleagues also benefit simply because of their institutional association, then all that will be tantamount to a widening of that historical "institutional edge" and a return to payment by place of work.

Where will that leave teachers in the primary and secondary schools, particularly if there is also a reduction of the contact teaching load of those at the BCC ? The significance of the imminent regrading exercise in the public service in the context of the above should not be lost upon anyone.

All this may prove a major industrial relations challenge since a relative depression of salary scales in the teaching service will have inevitable implications for retention and recruitment of staff.

To my fifth ball.

Educational reform has the potential to create disputes. If disputes exist, then there must be a process for their resolution in the context of an industrial relations climate. The Chief Labour Officer has had a statutory responsibility for more than half a century to offer conciliation services. It is ironic that historically the central civil service has been excluded or has excluded itself from that process, the weight of which was discovered by the BUT when it sought not so long ago to have the Labour Department assist in the matter of the transfer of Principals.

However, that void may soon be filled. The pertinent questions are: what should be the mechanics of conflict resolution for teachers? Should they have access to a system which caters to private sector and public sector workers alike? Is it possible to fashion a system within the voluntaristic framework which can function without the intrusion of lawyers?

I mention in passing that the recommendation by the Forde Commission of a Public Service Appeal Board, if accepted as it stands, will have competence solely in matters of a disciplinary nature. That body will have no locus in the myriad other forms of conflict which can arise between worker and worker or between worker and the several agents of the employer in the public service.

The Social Partners have for some time been examining the concept of voluntary tripartite tribunals of an advisory nature, such tribunals not coming into the picture until after the conciliation process at the Labour Department has been exhausted and has been proved to be unsuccessful. These tribunals as conceived would represent a further development of the voluntaristic system of industrial relations.

However, the possibility of their establishment is threatened by the thinking exhibited in the proposals of the draft Employment Rights Bill - a piece of legislation which, inter alia, does not bind the Crown and which in its current form makes provision for a Tribunal unlike any other in Barbados, and for a process which does not accord with what has taken place historically in Barbados.

There is a school of thought that there is no need to provide another tribunal for dispute settlement since such a framework already exists in law in the Trade Disputes (Arbitration and Enquiry) Act. Cap 360. This Act also applies to those employed by the Crown - bar the police and military services - and a decision to seek resolution through a tribunal under the Act would be in accordance with the principles and practice of voluntarism because it requires the consent of both parties to the dispute. The fact that this 1939 piece of legislation has been used so sparingly does not allow this theoretical argument the additional benefit of reference to satisfactory precedent.

Another alternative to what is proposed in the draft of the Employment Rights Bill is the establishment of a Tribunal no different from those which already sit to deal with severance payments matters.

The immediate challenge, however, is to persuade the Government that the addition of the proposed, and undoubtedly laudable, protections envisaged in the Employment Rights Bill can be achieved without violating the status quo of the conciliation process. This is of paramount importance.

There is, more so than in the private sector, a greater dependence on legislative direction for the process of industrial relations in the public service. It is thus equally important to have the conciliation services of the Labour Department extended so as to encompass the public service, something likely to become increasingly necessary for the betterment of industrial relations in education whether there is a Teaching Service Commission or not and regardless of the provisions of the proposed Public Service Act.

I run up now to deliver the last ball.

I speak of the challenges associated with the process of uniting all those organisations which represent teachers. This has been mooted for some time and some limited attempt was made several decades ago by persons who had membership of no public sector trade union, who were outside the real politick of industrial relations, and whose efforts were thus doomed to failure.

There has been over the last few years a closer association than ever before of those who represent the interests of teachers. There has been in particular a hitherto unprecedented sharing of information and representation by the BUT and BSTU at meetings both in Barbados and abroad.

Should the exercise to achieve unity be one of agreement on simple absorption, or should it go beyond that type of amalgamation to the creation of a separate and new identity? How much of the past of the individual entities should be preserved in the exercise of fusion? What organisational structure should be attempted - should the trade union be one of divisions? If so, should it be one which recognises hierarchies of employment within the profession, or should it reflect the arbitrary age divisions of educational institutions? Should there be a paid General Secretary and what should be the intrinsic scope and authority of that office? Should elections be held annually or is there a valid case on financial and other grounds for there to be Biennial Conferences? How can democracy at the work place level be fostered and reflected within the formal structure of the organisation?

Then there are the financial matters. For example, how are the differing group medical schemes to be accommodated, particularly bearing in mind that one will have a not insignificant proportion of retired teachers, some of whom are over 70? What is to happen with the relationship with the respective auxiliary bodies, the credit unions?

These are but a few of the questions for our collective contemplation.

The uniting of long established and successful organisations is never entirely simple since some hard decisions have to be made, decisions which although based on reason have to take account of the emotions prompted by the nostalgia of decades of association.

Any such formal exercise will, for what my opinion is worth, first require a consultative and educational process - the alerting and sensitising of the respective memberships of the possibilities with all their potential ramifications and the collection of all data and opinions germane to the matter. Assuming no outright rejection, then this would have to be followed by the simultaneous democratic process for the seeking of agreement in principle. Once there is mutual agreement in principle then there would have to be a detailed agenda for deliberations upon the nature of the changes.

The most critical part of the deliberations would be those surrounding potential areas of conflict. These should be itemised for special consideration and treatment within the overall process.

The two major international bodies representing teachers accomplished a merger over time and the lessons of that experience would be available for the asking.

In closing, I submit that fundamental to the success of the response to the challenges posed by any exercise of reform is the capacity to recognise and understand the potential imperfections. Secondly, the ability to counter the imperfections which have been anticipated and identified.

And so the umpire has called "Over" and I take my sweater.

Posterity, will register how well we will have with coped with this and the other balls we have to face. Like my sheep, I ramble in hope.

Your own challenge this evening will have been to have had the tolerance to bear with me. My thanks for the patience which has been so graciously extended.

The theme chosen this year, Globalization, and the Changing Context of Education brings with it significant implications for our educational system in Barbados. For in discussing the issue of globalization, one recognizes that it is not totally an economic phenomenon, but that it will have serious far reaching impact on education and other issues such as health.

Globalization and by extension neo-liberalists policies will provide challenges to the Barbadian education system. The entire system will undergo changes, and the new technologies which act as engines of globalization will continue to be part and parcel of our working environment. Those entering the world of work in the 21st century will face many challenges. The future world of work will be increasingly knowledgebased and technology-driven. With technology replacing labour, more individuals will shift to self-employment such as home working and entrepreneurial activities. These challenges will require them to be flexible in their ability to acquire new knowledge and skills, adapt to constantly changing production processes, and function in new work environments.

The decentralization of education will also be an issue in that privatization of education may become a number one issue on the national agenda. Recently, a meeting was held between the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs & Culture and the Private Sector. As a result, a project has been initiated between the private and public sector called Private-Public Sector Partnerships in Education. The document which was used as an information base spoke to the ultimate importance of the private sector as a major recipient of the product of the school, and further encouraged the fostering of a more systematic and mutually beneficial approach to the partnership.

One may ask - who will benefit most from this partnership? Last year, I asked who would have benefitted from the Social Partnership? This project may very well become one of significance to both the sectors in this globalization market, thus affecting policies which will impact on education. Globalization will affect who determines the substance of the curriculum, how education is delivered, who has access to education and to how much, and whether what happens in school is relevant to the cultural experiences of those being educated.

The question therefore is - will education continue to be recognized as a human right or will it be categorized as a tradable commodity? In a paper presented at the IDEA Hemispheric Conference in Quito in 1999, Larry Kuehn, in a paper entitled "Strategies for Defending Public Education" pointed out that free public education ensures that children can be educated regardless of the economic status of their families and thus contribute to social equity and moreover, the loss of universal public education consistently produces inequality in societies.

Where then is the point of compromise between the principle of education as a right and social service and that of the possible thrust to place education in the context of a tradable commodity?

What impact will the apparently changing philosophy underpinning education have on our class rooms? What impact will it have on teachers and students? What is the role of teacher trade unions in the changing context of education?

There has to be a response of globalization. Can one assume that such response has come in the form of the technological thrust, where over the next 5-7years, the Education Sector Enhancement Programme EduTech 2000 will undertake to computerize primary and secondary in

an effort to increase the number of young Barbadians contributing to the sustainable social and economic development?

Other changes which are envisaged are curriculum Reform, involving innovative teaching and learning strategies, curriculum and content adaptation and revision, classroom reconfiguration, assessment practices, and school-community links. Of major interest for the classroom teacher must be the implementation of training and re-training programmes, not only in the skills and competencies relating to the eventual mastery of the technology, but in areas such as counseling, parenting skills and other issues of a social nature which will affect the child in the classroom.

Globalization also affects the cultural landscape of the country. Fortunately, this aspect has been addressed by the Ministry of Education, in that it has conceptualized a programme which ensures that the Barbadian culture remains at the centre piece of our educational system.

One of the areas of significant focus will be that of the technical/vocational arena. For it is within this field that a symbiotic relationship can develop, but herein lies the rub. Who will be dictating to whom? Which of the partners will receive greater benefits? Will our developing society be able to respond to the demands which will be placed on it, with our limited resources? Will the school still see the teaching of life skills as one of its fundamental goals?

The Second International Congress on Technical and Vocational training which was held in Seoul , 1999, produced a set of recommendation captioned Technical and Vocational Education Training. A Vision for the 21 S` Century. These recommendation constitute the foundation for UNESCO's new programme in TVET, which commenced in January 2000. The three (3) objectives are:

- to strengthen TVET as an integral component of lifelong learning
- to orient TVET for sustainable development and
- to provide TVET for all

BUT is positioning itself to respond to the challenges in the Tech/Voc area so as to better inform members and prepare them for the shift in the private-public sector partnership. Our P.R.O.Cobin Hinds attended the E.I. Conference TVET in Brussels and the recommendations of E.I. will be sent to the I.L.O meeting which will be considering TVET as a marketable commodity.

Our very environments are undergoing rapid change. With the introduction of the technology into our schools, we have experienced what is said to be unprecedented refurbishing and renovations of schools in order to accommodate this innovation. Although invaluable to the enhancement of the conditions under which teachers work, severe dislocation and disruption in some cases, characterized this renovation. Whereas teachers responded to the upheaval in as a professional manner as they could, they would have undergone both physical and emotional trauma during this period of change.

With the proposed piloting of the appraisal system island wide, the factor of teachers' health will feature prominently in the implementation of the pilot scheme. The Barbados Union of Teachers has made it abundantly clear that the impact of the disruption on the health of the teachers and students has to be recognized whenever the process of appraisal commences.

It is with the knowledge that many teachers are working under tremendous strain as a result of the serious social conditions which are impacting on the students, and by extension the school, that The Barbados Union of Teachers is reiterating that a number of teachers are looking forward to their retirement, either at the voluntary age of fifty-five or the compulsory age of sixty, and that it will leave a void in the system. They have recognised that functioning as a maturing work force

which has to find the coping skills to handle the societal ills which are being experienced in the school room, will present considerable challenges.

This period of unprecedented change must inspire confidence that although education is dynamic, that the initiatives will acknowledge the human element and show the human face. This behaviour will further engender the commitment necessary for the acceptance of the many changes which will characterise the professionalization of our educational system. This confidence must be inspired from the level of the Ministry of Education, so that confidence can be reposed in the Principals by the teachers and the students. Dialogue on all issues must redound to the benefit of the profession, which at times is seen as the scapegoat of society.

The recognition of the features of globalization is paramount if we are to attempt to tackle the issue. Foremost must be the education of teachers, trade unionists, and officials in the Ministry of Education, so that the impact of globalization is acknowledged.

Stakeholders must utilize opportunities to dialogue with the international bodies such as the IMF (International Monetary Fund) and the IADB (Inter-American Development Bank), the lending agencies of the world, with a view to hammering out enhanced terms and conditions of service. Fortunately, the Barbados Union of Teachers has been accessing the requisite skills and knowledge in this field, through the various conferences, seminars and workshops in which we have been participating. Plans are well on the way for a Seminar which is being organized by the Barbados Union of Teachers and the Florida/Volunteer Association, to be held in early May. This seminar is aimed at providing an environment which will seek to provide some answers to the issues of globalization.

How then can small developing states like the Caribbean survive within the context of globalization? How will the practitioners of education continue to deliver the knowledge and skills which are to enrich the lives of our students when industrial countries are keen to export educational programmes? What are the implications for national development when education provision is from outside the country? How will our norms, values, cultures will be reflected?

If teachers, students, Ministry Officials, parents, trade unionists and the community are to advance the mission and vision of this profession, then we must recognize education as building a sense of national identity. We need to ensure that public education is protected at all levels. As a teacher trade union, we must continue to defend and promote the best professional interests of our members.

Finally, we must continue to foster the development of quality educational structures for all of our young people.

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