

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IN BELIZE

(1940s – Early 1960's)

By: Nicholas Anthony Ignatius Pollard, Jr.

About the Author:

Nicholas, better known as Nick, Jr. is the eldest son and the second child of the late Nick Pollard, Sr., Belize's most brilliant trade unionist of the nationalist era and the 1960s when Belize was still a British Colony. Nick, Jr. was born in the year of the devaluation; at the young age of twelve, his boyhood days had been cut short and he soon found himself at his father's side where fear and danger always lurked. Nick at the age of twelve was actually in the polling campaign at the United Fruit Company water front in 1962 with his father when Nick, Sr. defeated Norman Lanfiesta with his newly formed Christian Workers Union. Nick, Sr. was replaced with Lanfiesta when the People's United Party Leader, George Price expelled him from his Christian Democratic Union in 1958. Nick, Sr. would form a new union in 1962 which he named the Christian Workers Union, an affiliate of C.L.A.S.C. Nick, Jr. attended high school at St. John's (Jesuit) College from 1963 to 1964 and 1966 to 1968. From 1964 to 1966, he attended St. Joseph High School in Trinidad & Tobago where Nick, Sr. was based as the Executive Officer for the English speaking Caribbean.

Following his graduation from St. John's College in 1968, he was employed in Belize with C.O.M.S.A., a Salvadorian company that manufactured steel tanks for the storage of petroleum products. He was also employed with C.O.M.S.A. in El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and Nicaragua from 1970 to 1972. Nick, Jr. and his brother Paul are presently building a website that you can now visit at www.nickpollard.org in honour of their Father, Nick, Sr. Nick, Jr. is also working on a manuscript, "The Jaws of Politics" which he intends to publish early next year. "I am passionate about my history and I had a great love for my father." (Nick, Jr.)

Religion and the British Colony:

The colony's forests had been depleted of its valuable logwood, mahogany, sapodilla and its sap, 'chicle'. Millions of pounds of chicle had been extracted and millions of square feet of lumber had gone overseas to England and the United States. Robert Sydney Turton and British conglomerate Belize Estate & Produce Co. Ltd. were fighting for the last trees. The powerful religions had come to the colony's shores to penetrate the souls of the various ethnic groups while business and politics dominated the working force which had begun to agitate for better wages and working conditions. After World War two, the British attempted to consolidate its colonies into a West Indies Federation. By 1943, the first registered trade union was formed. A nationalist movement financed by Robert Sydney Turton and made up of Jesuit trained scholars would campaign for 'social justice' under Rome's papal encyclical, the 'Rerum Novarum' and the promise of sharing the nation's wealth with the working class. Both Europe and the Latin American countries had adopted Christianity as the driving force behind the trade union movement such as the International Federation of Christian Trade Unions (I.F.C.T.U) in Europe and the Confederation of Latin American Christian Trade Unions (C.L.A.S.C.). This article will examine the influence of the Catholic Church and the American Jesuits on the political conflicts and power shifting among the trade union leaders.

Rome's Vatican on Social Justice:

“We have addressed you in the interests of the Church and of the common weal, and have issued letters bearing on political power, human liberty, the Christian constitution of the State, and like matters, so have we thought it expedient now to speak on the condition of the working class. It is no easy matter to define the relative rights and mutual duties of the rich and of the poor, of capital and labour. And the danger lies in this, that crafty agitators are intent on making use of these differences of opinion to pervert men's judgements and to stir up the people to revolt.” **Pope Leo XIII Papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, 1891 on the rights of the working class.**

Arrival of the Jesuits:

In 1893, Pope Leo XIII declared the colony a ‘vicariate’. *“In 1851 the first two Jesuit priests were sent by the Vicar Apostolic of Jamaica to preach the faith and to convert the heathen. From these humble beginnings the Roman Catholic Church soon established a strong position so that in 1856 it was already second in importance to the Anglican Church in the capital. In the advent of the vicariate, the colony was then administered by Jesuits from the American Society of Jesus from Missouri Province. Even though a Bishopric was created in 1956, it is still the Missouri Jesuits who control the Catholic Church in Belize.”* (Dobson: 318-19)

Rome's Vatican and Europe confronts Communism & Socialism:

So, why discuss the Roman Catholic Church and its role in Labour? The fact is that Communism was a moving force in Europe in the early 1800's because of the aggressive teachings of Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin and others who were disgusted with the terrible working conditions of the masses in industrial areas. Hence Pope Leo's *Rerum Novarum* of 1891 came about. However, Pope Leo condemned Socialism. He said, *“To remedy these wrongs the socialists, working on the poor man's envy of the rich, are striving to do away with private property, and contend that individual possessions should become the common property of all, to be administered by the State or my municipal bodies...”* It further states: *“Socialists, therefore, by endeavoring to transfer the possessions of individuals to the community at large, strike at the interests of every wage earner, since they would deprive him of the liberty of disposing of his wages, and thereby of all hope and possibility of increasing his resources and of bettering his condition in life.”* (*Rerum Novarum*,)

The terrible working conditions in Europe eventually led to the **Russian Revolution** in 1917 by the Bolsheviks led by Vladimir Lenin which established the Soviet Union. Pope Pius XI later issued a new encyclical called the *Quadragesimo Anno* in 1931. The Roman Catholic Church's position was that there was a need to discuss the ethical implications of the social and economic order and he called for the reconstruction of the social order based on the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity. He noted major dangers for human freedom and dignity arising from unrestrained capitalism and totalitarian communism.

Pollard's analysis of Christianity in trade unions:

I always wondered why my father was so serious about his work in the Labour Movement and why he disliked being branded a communist but sometimes admitted to being a mild socialist because he hated injustices in the working place. Nick Sr. was a strong Roman Catholic and studied the teachings of the Rerum Novarum from 1946 to 1950 as a member of the Christian Social Action Movement that was started by Jesuit President, Father E. J. O'Donnel. In an article published by The Reporter news paper on Sunday, July 6, 1997 entitled "I.F.C.T.U (W.C.L.) – C.L.A.S.C. (C.L.A.T.) in Belize" captioned under writings from his unfinished manuscript, "Stirrings of a Nation", he mentions other members of the C.S.A. being George Price, John Albert Smith, Narciso (Nacho) Valdez, Edgar Gegg, Terence Keating (Scottish Immigrant, director at Brodie's and later activist in the Loyal & Patriotic Order of the Baymen), Leigh Richardson, Jr., and his cousin, Philip Goldson. And Nick, Sr. wrote what I consider today his explanation of why he committed himself to the Trade Union Movement. **By the way, Stirrings of a Nation may have been Harry Lawrence's idea because Nick's actual manuscript title was "Secrets of a New Nation".** He wrote:

"The main topic of discussion was the Papal Encyclicals dealing with affairs brought on by the birth of the Industrial Revolution (early 19th century), Marxist Communism, laissez faire economies, Social Democracy – all coming out of the middle or late 1800s. Strangely, never in the course of C.S.A. discussions were the actual terms "Christian Democracy" as a political movement or ideology and its twin action movement, Christian Trade Unions, mentioned. This was probably because Father O'Donnel and SJC were then, as now, U.S.-oriented, and those terms were European in origin." He continues: "In fact and in practice, the United States government and people do not like the term "Christian" applied outside of religious institutions, because of their constitutional tradition of separation of state and religion. There are no Christian trade unions and Christian Democratic Party in the U.S. By tradition and inclination, probably dating back to the Protestant Reformation, neither has Social Christian terminology been used in Britain or British-oriented like Belize and the West Indies. The term and the ideology are largely used and practiced in European and Latin countries where the Catholic Church exerts much influence, although some non-Christian groups in non-Christian countries have adapted and adopted some "Christian" concepts of politics and trade unionism to suit their own needs. Besides "Rerum Novarum" and Pius XI's "Quadragesimo Anno" (celebrating the 40th year of Leo's Great Encyclical), Leo also wrote specifically on Christian Democracy on Jan. 18, 1908, and specifically on Socialism and Nihilism in 1878. Pius XI in 1903 and 1905 published encyclicals specially on Christian Social Action."

Founding of the World Confederation of labour:

In 1920, the World Confederation of Labour was founded at The Hague under the name of the “International Federation of Christian Trade Unions”, (I.F.C.T.U.) as a confederation associated with the Christian Democratic parties of Europe. It originally catered to Roman Catholic constituencies and was designed to provide an alternative to the secular trade unions in Europe at the time, basing its foundation on the Rerum Novarum and the Quadragesimo Anno. Totalitarian governments of the 1930s repressed the federation and imprisoned many of its leaders, limiting their operations until the end of World War 11.

Harsh labour conditions in British Honduras:

Reports revealed by Narda Dobson, Dr. Cedric Grant and Steven Fairweather show that millions of square feet of mahogany and cedar, thousands of tons of logwood and millions of pounds of chicle were exported from the late 1700’s up until 1932. (Dobson: 129, Grant: 39 and Stephen Fairweather’s “Baymen of Belize”: Exhibit 16, pg. 69) It was a ruthless exploitation committed against the colony by British interests and local loggers among them Robert Sydney Turton, inclusively logs from a German logger ‘Mengel’ in Payo Obispo, now Chetumal and from Peten, Guatemala. In 1919, Belizean soldiers who had served in World War 1 returned from Mesopotamia only to find themselves caught in a rising cost of living and deteriorating wages. Monthly wages had fallen from \$12.64 to \$8.21.

Robert Sydney Turton, the godfather:

The demand for mahogany would eventually lead to serious conflicts between mahogany and chicle magnate, Robert Sydney Turton and British owned Belize Estate & Produce Co. When Sapodilla’s chicle became ‘gold’ in the U.S.A. in the late 1890s, Turton was already a teenager (born circa 1879 and died in 1955 at age 76). He would have been actively involved from 1910 to 1932 when both he and Belize Estate exported over 50 million pounds of the colony’s chicle to Great Britain and the U.S.A and over 200 million square feet of mahogany and cedar! And since he was a share holder in Wrigley’s operation (Grant: 131), one has to consider that both American owned companies, Wrigley and I.T.Williams would have lobbied their congressmen urging them to find ways to reject the Clayton Bulwer Treaty of 1850 which was already an issue between both British and Americans. The treaty was to reconcile British and American interests in Central America. (Dobson: 139, 198) This is part of our history that has been ‘low-played when it is vital to the events leading up to the 1949 devaluation of the Belize Dollar and the eventual formation of the People’s Committee by the Jesuits’ C.S.A. and the People’s United Party under a campaign of a nationalist movement. It is also important to understand that everywhere in the colony, loggers and labourers were now seeing the light in the forests and wages were way below the cost of living index. And so, it is understandable why Antonio Soberanis, a barber led a demonstration against Belize Estate & Produce Company in 1935. His ‘Unemployed Workers Association’ was probably the first group to consider organizing into labour groups or a union.

Robert Sydney Turton takes on the British:

Turton's dislike for the British led him with the financial support of his associates in the U.S.A. to run for political office and in 1936, he defeated British candidate, C. H. Brown for a seat in the Legislative Council. (Grant: 8). Wrote Grant, "*Turton's victory confirmed the political ascendancy of the local nouveaux riches, and, more important, provided the American concerns with another indefatigable parliamentary supporter.*"

Sir Harrison Courtenay, who was at one time a close ally of Turton's was named a commissioner of the West Indies Federation Commission in Montego Bay in 1947 and would later address an elite creole gathering on April 15th, 1950 urging them to accept membership into the W.I.F. and, would warn of those who wanted the colony to serve two masters. (Source, "The Daily Clarion, 1950) Also, see presentation made by Nick Jr., "The Conspiracy of the West Indies Federation" at www.nickpollard.org. Turton tutored Price in business and politics when Price joined his business in 1942. Price was elected to the Belize Town Board in 1947 and soon Price became Turton's front man. (Grant: 5&6) Very little has been written about Robert Sydney Turton but historically he is the Father of the Nationalist Revolution. Whether there was a connection between these two activists, Turton and Price, both militant and anti-British, and the C.S.A. of the Jesuits, we do not know but it is a known fact that Turton orchestrated the take-over of the B.H.G.W.U. Turton had lost large sums of money in the 1949 devaluation and he was out to remove the British from the colony.

Pollard, trade union activist:

By 1948, trade union activist, Nicholas Pollard, Sr. had been employed at James Brodie & Company Limited and with his Jesuit training formed the first Mercantile Union. "*In 1948, the managing director of James Brodie & Co., Alexander J. Hunter, indirectly gave me an opportunity to exercise more than the credit union idea learned from the social encyclicals. He gave written notice to Brodie's employees that because wartime price controls had not been lifted but increased by Controller J. R. Minty, a former Brodie director, payment of our quarterly bonus would have to be terminated. I immediately began to hold Brodie's workers meetings weekly in members' private homes, distributing copies of extracts from the encyclicals. We had agreed to keep the meetings secret until we had registered as a legal trade union*" (Pollard's Secrets of a New Nation)

Clifford Betson, Trade union Patriarch loses his union:

On the 28th of April, 1950 at Thistle Hall, Clifford E. Betson and his seven-year old union, The British Honduras General Workers Union, B.H.G.W.U., was ousted and replaced by new president, Nicholas Pollard, Sr., vice-president, John A. Smith and Clifford Betson. Other nominees were James Middleton, Robert Panton and Henry Jex. There were fifty-two delegates that cast their votes. At that time the union had a membership of some 2,000 workers. Following his defeat, General Secretary Henry A. Middleton warned his audience of the damage that had been crafted: "Be careful," he said, "Flowery speeches was not all. It was the duty of the Union to elect men who are

conscientious and to avoid electing “men who can be bought for a few dollars.” (source: The Daily Clarion, No. 96, Sat. April 29, 1950) The BHGWU was formed in 1943 and registered under the Trade Union Ordinance on the 13th May, 1943. Other members were James E. Osling, Obadiah Trapp, Robert H. Panton and Council members, Samuel Hepburn, T.O. Cherrington, Christopher Card and a co-founder of the union, shipwright Burton V. Locke. (Source: union’s handbook) These heroes’ names are an honourable mention. In his book, Dr. Grant describes the events leading up to the take over of the union and provided this comment:

“The political leaders had assumed control of the G.W.U., not only for its organizational value in the districts but perhaps more important because they believed that industrial objectives could be more effectively pursued by political means. As the union gained strength, it was increasingly dominated by politicians.” (Grant: 126-127) As an aspiring historian who has studied in depth the history of my father’s involvement with the trade union movement, I can say that trade unions were never again freed from political domination and manipulation. (Period of studies and research: 1940s – 1980s)

The ‘West’ moves to prevent Communism in the Labour Forces and forms O.R.I.T.

The West, fearing an infiltration of Communism into the industrial areas of Latin America, Central America and the Caribbean after World War 11, formed a new international labour organization called O.R.I.T., Organizacion Regional Interamericana de Trabajadores. My father writes about the G.W.U.’s affiliation to O.R.I.T. in his manuscript, “Secrets of a New Nation”. He says, “*The G.W.U. was affiliated to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, in whose founding in December, 1949, in London General Secretary H. A. Middleton had participated. The I.C.F.T.U. was sponsored by the American Federation of Labour, the U.S. Congress of Industrial Organizations and the British Trade Union Congress, after these and other pro-West unions walked out of the Communist-controlled World Federation of Trade Unions. The W.F.T.U. had held together as one only long enough to see Hitler and Japan defeated. Similarly, the Americas the “democratic” unions quit the Communist-oriented C.T.A.L. (Confederation of Labour) controlled by Mexico’s famed Communist Vicente Toledano.*”

The ‘West’ moves to prevent Communism in the Labour Forces and forms O.R.I.T. (continued....)

Nick, Sr. continues: “*In January, 1951, Henry Middleton and I represented the G.W.U. in Mexico City at the founding of the new American-dominated O.R.I.T. (Inter-American Regional Organization of Labour). There we met such giants of the labour world as George Meany, Dave Mc’Cordle, Walter Reuther, a brother of John L. Dewis, Sir Vincent Towson of the British T.V.C., Fidel Velasquez of the Mexican Confederation of Labour, Eusebio Miguel, General Secretary of the London Labour Confederation, and J.H. Oldenbrock, General Secretary of the I.C.F.T.U., O.R.I.T.’s parent body. One of the major issues at the Congress was the admission of the Peronist Argentine Labour Confederation, with Mexico for and the Americans against. Since the Americans won, Mexico refused to join O.R.I.T. and make Mexico its headquarters, so the first Headquarters of O.R.I.T. became Havana, Cuba, which was then ruled by democratic*

President Rhio Nacarras. Francisco Aguirre of Cuba was elected General Secretary.” Pollard would attend union meetings in Cuba in 1951 and 1952. (Source: Secrets of a New Nation)

At the Congress, my father became O.R.I.T.’s first Caribbean and Central American organizer at \$200.00 per month, all expenses paid in 1951. I invite you to visit www.nickpollard.org and view a very historical photograph of the combined members of the P.U.P. and the G.W.U. captioned in the Belize Billboard of Tuesday, April 3, 1951, under the headline story, “ Pray Hard, Live Justly, Study Hard, Work Hard, Pollard charges Unionists. What struck me as very interesting in the article is vice-president Johnny Smith’s comment. He is quoted as saying, “*Johnny Smith calls on unionists support so that the Union could help them to get their share of the wealth of B.H.*” His comment gives an indication in history that someone’s wealth was going to be shared with the growing union which numbered almost 12,000 in the early 1950s! But whose wealth? The Colony was in an economic depression and the only wealth available was that of Belize Estate & Produce Company! Was it Turton’s and Price’s intentions to seize that wealth and after Turton took what he wanted, share the crumbs with the workers? I am critical of the Nationalist campaign because the political domination of the union resulted in very little being achieved for the workers in the 1950s and 60s. Who achieved personal gain were the politicians who gained power in the Legislative Assembly and who later formed the first cabinet in 1961.

The 1952 Strike:

Two months after Richardson and Goldson were released from Her Majesty’s Prison on Goal Lane in Belize City, they organized and launched the historical strike of October, 1952. While there were riots and demonstrations in 1919 and Soberanis’s in 1935, this was the bravest move by a group of young aspiring nationalists, Leigh Richardson, Philip Goldson, Henry Jex, including Mexican born, Nick Pollard, Sr. Price did not take part in the strike and the Leader of the P.U.P. Johnny Smith who was also the vice-president of the G.W.U. refused to participate or to go against the British. This eventually resulted in his resignation from the G.W.U./P.U.P. The strike was called on October 20th and called off on the 30th. Negotiations went on into November between the Union, the Colonial Government and the Labour Advisory Board. The Union demanded a \$1.00 increase per day but the government offered only .22 cents more. The Union’s position was that the cost of living index was \$25.90 weekly. At \$1.00 per day they were compromising for \$19.08 weekly. The Government would offer only \$14.40 weekly. Eventually in November, the Union had no choice but to accept the Government’s offer. Over 2,000 workers from the citrus belt in Stann Creek Town marched in support of the strikers in Belize City. The G.W.U. had also achieved a 10% wage increase for the workers with the Citrus Company that was back dated to July 1st and fringe benefits amounting to another 20% or so of their wages. (Source: *The Belize Billboard, Oct. 24 –Nov 6th, 1952*) Stann Creek boasted a powerful G.W.U. When the G.W.U./P.U.P. split took place at the A.G.M. Meeting on September 29th at the Riverside Hall in Belize City, trade union leader Benguche would lead his break-away members to form the General

Workers Development Union while David McKoy and Pollard would form the Southern Christian Union that left the G.W.D.U. a very weak union.

The \$67.09 G.W.U./P.U.P. Split:

Let it never be said that it was only Leigh Richardson, Goldson and Jex decision to move toward West Indies Federation or, that it was Price's dream of an affiliation with Guatemala and the other Central American countries, O.D.E.C.A. that caused the split. These issues were already burning but it was the decision of Richardson, Goldson and Jex to expel Pollard from the G.W.U. and, to prosecute him in Court that resulted in Pollard's retaliation publicly during the months of July to September, 1956. The split created a battle for supremacy. Goldson, Richardson and Jex took control of the G.W.U. and the political organ, The Belize Billboard. Price supported Pollard and they launched a new newspaper in September called "The Belize Times"...the truth shall make you free". My father was the manager/editor of the newspaper and my mother was its typist.

AFL-CIO Investigator, Harry Pollak intervenes in fierce union dispute for turf:

Prior to the split, Pollard was expelled from the G.W.U. in July; he immediately formed a new union, the Christian Democratic Union with the support of trustees loyal to Price and intimidation tactics by Wilfredo 'Shubbu' Brown's "Black Hawks". The C.D.U. gained strength while the G.W.U. began to fall into disarray. On August 30th, a month before the split, Labour Adviser, L. S. Dixon on behalf of AFL-CIO's investigator, Harry Pollak ordered a "Cease Fire". It was accepted by both unions; Leopold Grinage and George Frazer signed for the G.W.U. and Albert Cattouse and Pollard signed for the new C.D.U. Pollak said, "*I have come to the conclusion which I will recommend to my respective organizations (O.R.I.T. and AFL-CIO), for analysis and for approval or disapproval: that the G.W.U. should be supported in this dispute in order that the principles of international free trade unionism – peace and freedom under conditions of social justice – shall be maintained and strengthened. I hope that the free workers of British Honduras will hold fast under the banner of the G.W.U. which despite internal difficulties, has been fighting long and hard to raise the standard of living in this pilot project of democracy.*" (Source: Belize Billboard, September 29th, 1956) Of course, neither Price nor Pollard paid any attention to Pollak's intervention. By early 1957, the G.W.U. was destroyed and Goldson's and Richardson's Honduran Independence Party which relied on union support lost to the P.U.P. in the 1957 General Elections not only in Belize City but also in Stann Creek where McKoy's and Pollard's Southern Christian Union had taken control of the workers in the citrus industry and to a certain extent, the water front workers. (*I knew McKoy well; I traveled with my father on the Heron H. to Stann Creek and Punta Gorda in the 1950s and he moved his family to Dangriga Town in 1956 to complete his union work.*)

The Titans clash:

In 1958 Price and Pollard political and trade union relationship came to an abrupt end. Pollard had been trying to get his British Nationality with Price's help but Price

reluctantly refused on the grounds that Belize would soon be affiliated with Guatemala and he would no longer require a British passport. Pollard supported the arrival plans for Princess Margaret in 1958 and, accepted a request from the Colonial Secretary to stop an impending strike in Gallon Jug. The Gallon Jug strike was an attempt to stop Princess Margaret's visit to Belize by the P.U.P. Price was no friend of the British; he had been charged (but not convicted) of sedition in 1957 because of a toilet paper incident and, he had been expelled from the London's delegation and stripped of his ministerial office by Governor Sir Collin Thornley for an alleged plot to sell Belize to Guatemala. (Dr. Grant: 187-189) Before Princess Margaret's arrival in March, 1958, Pollard was summoned to an urgent meeting at Riverside Hall and informed that he was expelled from the P.U.P. and his C.D.U. Over the years, Pollard has argued that Price had no authority to expel him from the C.D.U. since the party's executive did not have the authority to do so. I disagreed always from the position that Price was in full control and did what he wanted with a vengeance. It is a known historical fact that Price was a very vindictive politician.

Politicians abandon unions:

The political domination and manipulation of the trade unions (ref: Grant -126-27 above) finally reached its worse era when Pollard, who was considered countrywide as 'the trade unionist', abandoned his C.D.U. and formed a political party, the C.D.P., Christian Democratic Party. In the same year of 1958, Emilio Maspero, the General Secretary for C.L.A.S.C. visited British Honduras and met with Pollard and Enrique Depaz, a previously elected member for the Cayo District and, who resigned from the P.U.P. in late 1957 and joined the C.D.P. Maspero was very worried about the situation in the Colony. Maspero, an Argentinian who had joined "El Congreso Constitutivo de la Accion Sindical Argnetina (A.S.A.) in 1956, later fled to Venezuela fearing reprisals by the Argentine military, and associated with Mr. Jose Goldsack, President of C.L.A.S.C. Maspero had a great liking for my father and after that meeting the Pollard-Maspero friendship would continue indefinitely. I would later meet both Maspero and Romano Tschimule, C.L.A.S.C.'s representative for the Dutch Caribbean in Trinidad & Tobago in 1965 when they joined my father on a trip to Rome to visit the Pope. It was an entire Latin American delegation. (Visit: www.nickpollard.org , my manuscript. "The Jaws of Politics" and photograph of visit to Vatican.)

Winds of Change:

Pollard's C.D.P. lost all seats in the 1961 General Elections and so too did the N.I.P. The P.U.P. won a landslide victory and Price became 'First Minister' and formed his government's cabinet in March, 1961. After all wounds were licked and healed, Price locked up the trade unions under the vigilance of his area representatives and his minister of Labour, Lindbergh Rodgers.

Conclusion:

"The period 1961 to 1969 is extremely complex and full of intrigue. For one, the G.W.U. did not intend to die. It soon affiliated itself with the British Honduras Development

Union which had been established in Stann Creek by C. Benguche in opposition to McKoy's Southern Christian Union in the Citrus Industry. In June, 1960, these two unions merged to form the General Workers Development Union which would continue to give support to the ruling opposition, the National Independence Party (N.I.P.) under 1961's Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Philip Goldson. The political domination and manipulation of the unions would repeat itself and would result in the destruction of the National Federation of Christian Trade Unions in 1969 following the strike on the Belmopan site with Pauling & Co., a British Construction Company. The N.F.C.T.U. was formed by Pollard in 1962 with the support of Emilio Maspero of C.L.A.S.C. Eduardo Moure who came to Belize in 1962 to oversee the formation of the N.F.C.T.U. is still alive in Venezuela and communicated with me, advising me that my father was on the plaque of honours that was established in 2000. Pollard was employed by C.L.A.S.C. to be its Executive Officer for the English speaking Caribbean and the General Secretary for the N.F.C.T.U.

This appointment came about after Romano Tschimule met with Bishop Robert Hodapp, Lindbergh Rodgers and First Minister, George Price in June, 1961. *(For adverse comments on this appointment, visit The Belize Billboard, June – October, 1961, "As I see it", by Leigh Richardson.*

Again, during the era of the 'Non-Aligned Movement', the United General Workers Union under the Leadership of Thomas Martinez and Mischek Mauwema would also be destroyed due to 'leftist ideology' infiltrating the union by leftist politicians. (Refer to **Belizean Studies, Vol. 16 – No. 3 – 1988, "Creating and Manipulating Power within Dependency", by Laurie Kroshus Medina, B.A. (1985-1986)**)

In my opinion, trade unions will continue to serve their political masters and the worker will never again belong to a true trade union...not in the 21st century. Here is a related comment by Alma and Steve Young: *"In the early days of the nationalist movement brought into the political mainstream the working classes and the rural elements. The P.U.P. government has been termed "populist." And perhaps it was in the early days when an emphasis was placed on popular agitation to wrest power from the colonial authorities. But in later years it became obvious that the working class had never been systematically brought into the political process. Periodically the working classes were manipulated so that there would be large-scale demonstrations of support or of protest to change a course of action. Price used them effectively upon his return to Belize after the London incident in 1957. The opposition used them in 1968 to register its disapproval of the Webster Proposals, and again in 1981 to show its disavowal of the "Heads of Agreement." However there was never any sustained mobilization of the working class because they were not major actors in the attempt to win political independence."* (Belizean Studies, Volume 23, No. ½, September 2001, "The Impact of the Anglo-Guatemalan Dispute on the Internal Politics of Belize", by Alma H. Young and Dennis H. Young, Latin American Perspectives Journal)

Were Alma and Steve correct in 2001? Was my father right when he formed the National Federation of Christian Trade Unions in 1962? What was the sense of purpose? When

the National Federation of Christian Trade Unions was formed in 1962, Dr. Grant's research of the events at this time led him to write the following: *"Moreover, the Catholic and Latin American commitment of C.L.A.S.C. appealed to Price. It lent credence to his claim to be fostering Christian Democracy and strengthened his bond with the Jesuits."* (Dr. Grant: 283) And so, it can be clearly understood why the 1966 Trade Union Congress of Belize was made up of public servants, the teachers union and the General Workers Development Union, the majority being non-Catholics and why they isolated themselves from the N.F.C.T.U. The non-Catholics did not trust politicians to be involved in their trade union affairs.

Here is a short excerpt taken from a release by the BNTU (undated) when its offices were at #11, Barrack Road, Belize City. "The National Trade Union Congress of Belize was first formed and organized on Monday, 11th July, 1966, at a meeting held at the Riverside Hall in Belize City. At that time, three unions – the Public Officers' Union (POU), now PSU headed by President Edney Cain, the British Honduras Union of Teachers (BHUT – then only non-Catholic teachers, now BNTU) headed by then President Alvan Cadle and the General Workers' Development Union (GWDU) – Belize Branch President Steve Longworth signed the documents giving birth and legality to the NTUCB. This historic meeting and signing of a 14-point instrument of agreement was attended and witnessed by the following international trade union officials:

Mr. Javier Sandoval (Mexico) and Mr. Robert Hanson from ORIT, Latin American arm of the ICFTU with head offices in Mexico, and Mr. Steve Keating from PTTI (Postal Telegraph and Telephone International). The above document is from Pollard's archives.

Was it the beginning of a new cold war between the Catholic Unions and the Non-Catholic Unions with Price and Pollard on the Catholic side and Goldson et others on the Anglican/Protestants side? In Part 11 of the Trade Union History I will discuss the events that led to the demise of the Catholic unions and the rise and fall of Thomas Martinez's and Misheck Mawema's United General Workers Union.

References

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