

Labour Day

Monday, 7 September 2020

Good Morning Brothers and Sisters; Workers, Members, and Observers of our Labour Movement... on Behalf of the Government and the people of Bermuda I wish you a Happy Labour Day!

Today, we honour the people who make Bermuda work: the electricians and the plumbers - the teachers and the public servants - the bus drivers and the dock workers – the hotel workers and the postal workers; our mechanics, carpenters and masons; the ferry pilots and the branch pilots, the doctors, nurses, custodians; those in our uniformed services, the linesmen and women who keep the lights on, and the entertainers who brighten our dark days. All of the workers who put in an honest day's work. And, for that honest day's work, organized labour ensures they get an honest day's pay.

The Progressive Labour Party I lead is rooted in the union movement. We include trade unionists in our ranks and unlike some, we do not view unions with disdain.

We view our unions and their members as partners in the development of our nation. We believe that when we all work together - business, government **and** labour - that only then can all boats in our society be lifted.

There are some persons in our society who view organized labour with disdain. They seek to privatize public services and roll back the steps this Government has taken to make our tax system fairer, by taxing the wealth built off of **your** labour. And, they are the ones who, in these difficult times, are telling workers to *“be grateful you have a job.”*

I have news for those types of persons: Workers fight for fairness, fight for equality, and fight against workplace discrimination. Workers are **people** who must be treated fairly.

Labour’s principles and values have built a fairer and more equitable society, and it is our job to strengthen workers’ rights, not dismantle them. That is why it matters who the Government is.

Consider Government’s support for Workers during the pandemic. Just like the labour movement, we established benefits for everyone because it was the right thing to do; not just people voted for us, but ‘Workers’ full stop; that is a Labour value.

And Brothers and Sisters, the Labour leaders of Today, from Bro Furbert, to Bro Ball, to Dr. Charles and to BTUC President Sister Betty-Ann Caesar. I have had the honour of working with all of them since I have held this office and - , I actually joke with President Furbert and say – “Bro Chris, you’ve been negotiating longer than I’ve been alive” – but all jokes aside, the country is blessed to have strong and courageous labour leaders like these men and women – who ensure that their members are never ignored and are always recognised for their value.

Brothers and Sisters, it *really matters* when Workers consider their family’s future and must ponder which party respects working people. Ours is a party and government rooted in Labour and I would be remiss not to mention those in the labour movement - past and present - who stood strong for workers’ rights in good times and bad. My Constituent Bro. Ottiwell Simmons, Sis. Molly Burgess, Glenn ‘Dingbat’ Simmons, Sis Barbara Ball, Bro. Eugene Blakeney , Sis Leleath Bailey, Bro. Derrick Burgess, Dr. Eva Hodgson, Bro Calvin Smith and Bro. Jason Hayward.

I know you all know Jason Hayward but for those watching at home who may not: *Bermuda’s Minister responsible for Labour is a former President of the Bermuda Public Services Union and former President of the Bermuda Trade Union Congress who has represented Labour at here*

at home and abroad. I am immensely proud and the country is fortunate to have him as our Minister of Labour.

These are times when Workers are facing a “new normal”, and that’s true. But some Workers believe the new normal creates a “fearful future”. It must not!

Brother and sisters, We are living through a pandemic. Yes there will be uncertainty, and yes there are challenging times ahead, but rest assured – the Progressive Labour Party will maintain a heart for the people as we work to solve unprecedented problems caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Though our discussions may not always be easy, and at times we may not always see eye to eye, there is one thing that you should never forget.

The Progressive labour Party, made up of the sea of green you see here with you today, we will always serve Workers, we will always **Stand Strong with labour**, and together – with your support - we will continue our collective work to dismantle the Two Bermudas and replace it with one Bermuda built of the principle of fairness. Workers built our past and workers will build our prosperous future.

May God continue to Bless the Labour Movement and when labour is blessed and strong, Bermuda be blessed and strong!

United we Stand!

Thank you.