

NOTICES

- This is an election year. The SLTU Elections Commission has met and have slated March 25th, 2010 as Elections Day.
- The 16th Biennial Convention of the St Lucia Teachers' Union will be held on Thursday, April 15th, 2010. This convention is tentatively slated for the Micoud Multi Purpose Centre. More information will follow.
- The St. Lucia Teachers' Union Car Raffle of a 2009 Suzuki Swift 1.3L Hatchback car will take place at the end of April. All members are called upon to participate through the purchase and sale of tickets. Raffle books will be sent to all schools shortly. Please assist in the sale of these tickets. Look out for various road shows to be held in some communities soon.
- Members are reminded that our last collective agreement period ends on March 31st, 2010. The government has asked us to submit proposals for a new agreement for the period April 1st, 2010 to March 31st, 2013. Members are asked to submit to the office issues they would like to see included or addressed in the new collective agreement. Meanwhile, members are reminded that the balance of the 7.5% wage and salary increase (3.375%) is due in April 2010. Members are asked to be guided accordingly.
- The Caribbean Union of Teachers (CUT) 13th Biennial Students Athletic Championships will be held in St. Kitts on July 23rd & 24th, 2010. Members interested in attending the games should contact the SLTU office for additional information.
- A commemorative issue of Dialogue will be published in June 2010. Members wishing to add their memoirs of SLTU to this publication are asked to send their articles to howelldco@gmail.com or to the SLTU office at sltu@candw.lc.
- Members are encouraged to log on to www.stluciateachersunion.com for the latest SLTU news.



Union Vibes is a special publication by the St. Lucia Teachers' Union. The focus of this publication is to keep teachers abreast with current SLTU activities/ events.

A Tribute to an SLTU Stalwart *Theresa Surage - Plummer*

Mrs. Surage attended the Dame School formed for pre-schoolers from ages 5-7. From the age of seven (7), she walked everyday from Belle Vue to the Vieux Fort RC Girls Infant and Primary Schools.

In 1954, Mrs. Surage received a scholarship after coming first on the island. The examination was called "Scholarship Exams" at the time. She then migrated to Castries where she attended the St. Joseph's Convent from January 1955 to December 1959. Throughout Secondary School, students were given cumulative assessments which went towards their end-of-year grade. As one of the top students at the St. Joseph's Convent, Mrs. Plummer received many awards for her academic excellence.

On June 01, 1960, at the age of 20, Mrs. Surage was appointed to the post of PA 2 Teacher where she was paid a salary of \$60 monthly. She was assigned to the Ave Maria Girls' School where she taught the Common Entrance class for four (4) years and received 100% pass in the in the first two years and 95-100% passes thereafter. She was very instrumental in publishing the first ever school magazine which highlighted a collection of children's poems and other writings. In 1965, Mrs. Plummer enrolled at the Teachers' Training College and was among the first batch of students in San Souci.

In 1968 she migrated to Bequia with her husband. There she served as assistant principal at the Bequia Anglican School for two years.



Theresa Surage - Plummer

She was appointed deputy principal at the time and had a class. During this time, her enthusiasm for change, lead her to become part of the Bequia Teachers' Union. Upon returning home from Bequia, she reported to the RC Boys' Primary School as the deputy principal. Mrs. Plummer was the first and only female teacher at the school during that time. One of her landmarks achieved at the RC Boys' Primary School, was the introduction of "streaming" or homogeneous classification, a concept accepted with much trepidation by the authorities.

In 1975, she left the RC Boys School and went to the Vide Bouteille Projects School for five (5) years. The Project school was for the students who missed the Common Entrance Examination. In 1979, she left The Projects and went to teach at the Carmen Renee Memorial School for six years.

In 1985 she was awarded a Government Scholarship from the Government of Guyana. There she pursued a Bachelor's Degree in Educational Administration at the University of Guyana. Upon her return from university, Mrs. Plummer reported to the Carmen Renee Memorial School, where she served as acting principal and remained there until 1997. In 1998, she was transferred to the Corinth Secondary School as a teacher of Language and Literature. She taught there until her retirement in 2000. Mrs. Plummer taught for forty (40) years.

Teachers' Union Involvement:

Mrs. Plummer believes that the union was too timid during the time of her early involvement. Members were not allowed to speak to much on issues which affected them and attacked their superiors but there were a few who were highly critical and fearless. This is why the one-paged document called "The Act" was burnt publicly at a march held around the Columbus Square to demonstrate against such an insult. The document did not take into consideration conditions of work, distance traveled, salaries, additional qualifications and experience. Teachers were still under the PTA system.

She recalls that the Teachers' Union became very active during 1975-1979. The union wanted better conditions for teachers. It wanted to equate teachers' salaries with that of the Civil Service. This was difficult because the gap was so wide. During her time as General Secretary from the periods 1977-1978 and 1978-1979, there were many sick outs. Figure three was the strategy used as a base. Teachers would stay two days out and call a meeting on the third day. Then every third teacher would stay home. That plan became effective within a weekend of planning and went through the entire week. A meeting was then held after the first week of sick out. Then it intensified where two teachers stayed home for two days and one reported. The Ministry of Education then had parents to report to the schools. The Union visited schools and met parents on a one-one basis. Parents were told that they were doing a job which was not theirs and was not qualified to do. The Caribbean Union of Teachers (CUT) was prepared to have a sickout in solidarity with SLTU if government did not meet its requests. Off course, someone would alert them of the plan. The 1978 sick out led to the 1979 strike where teachers were out for fifty two (52) days. That year, Government approved its highest salary increase; 75% for the lowest grade, 60 % for the middle grade and 50% for the highest grade.

Mrs. Surage- Plummer was and continues to be a strong supporter of the union and all its activities. She was also the shop steward for the Carmen Renee Memorial School.



THE EXECUTIVE OF THE ST. LUCIA TEACHERS' UNION WISHES ALL ITS MEMBERS A HAPPY INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY!!!

We want men and women to unite for power and progress!!!!

THE ST. LUCIA TEACHERS' UNION

IN COLLABORATION WITH PRESTIGE AUTO
BRINGS TO YOU A 75TH BIRTHDAY
CAR RAFFLE!!!!!!



TICKETS ARE AVAILABLE FROM :
MEMBERS OF SLTU
SLTU HEADQUARTERS
TEACHERS CREDIT UNION OFFICE

Buy your tickets early.
Due Date: April 22nd, 2010

*Dedicated to Woman
Bound in duty to
Preserve, clean, your body
Earth's sons to procreate
In God's Master Plan of
Perfection, as He fashioned
You-a complement
His Creation*