

National Workers Union

Organise the Unorganised

Workers of the world unite!



UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

- CUBA -

INFORMATION SUBMITTED BY THE **NATIONAL WORKERS UNION**

CONTRIBUTION TO THE **CUBA** UPR, APRIL-MAY 2013

1 INTRODUCTION

- 2 The *National Workers Union (NWU)* was established in October 2004 and is based in Trinidad and Tobago. It undertakes typical trade union work in organising the unorganised and is a general trade union, taking into membership any workers not currently organised by other trade unions.
- 3 The NWU's contact details are:

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- 4 The NWU has sent delegates to Cuba on activities organised by the *World Federation of Trade Union (WFTU)* and has seen and experienced the situation in Cuba, albeit only for brief periods.
- 5 The Union has also been involved in meeting delegations from the Cuba when they visit Trinidad and Tobago.

6 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 7 The NWU, in this submission, has highlighted several areas from its own experience in which Cuba has assisted in the development of human rights in Trinidad and Tobago, one of its Caribbean neighbours. These include:
 - the provision of scholarships to study in Cuba;
 - exchanges which provide for Cuban medical professionals to work in the Trinidad and Tobago public health care system;
 - beneficial exchanges in the area of sporting developments;
 - a model example of addressing responses to natural disasters;
 - the development of solidarity between working people through trade union co-operation;
 - difficulties imposed by the fifty years economic blockade by the United States of America.

8 SCHOLARSHIPS

- 9 The Government of the *Republic of Cuba* has, for many years, provided scholarships to young people in Trinidad and Tobago, and the rest of the Caribbean. These are provided, not only through the Government of the *Republic of Trinidad and Tobago*, but also through organisations sympathetic to Cuba such as *Cuba Solidarity* and *Friends of Cuba*.
- 10 This provides opportunities to young people from poorer backgrounds who would have little possibility of undertaking such education in Trinidad and Tobago to receive a high level of education free of charge.
- 11 These educational opportunities include human medicine, which enables newly trained doctors and other medical professionals to contribute to the improvement of health care in Trinidad and Tobago on their return.
- 12 Cuba should continue with its programme of scholarships and expands this when it has the resources to do so.

13 HEALTH CARE

- 14 Through arrangements with the Government of the *Republic of Trinidad and Tobago*, Cuba has provided medical professionals to supplement the public health care system in Trinidad and Tobago.
- 15 In June 08, 2012, a brigade of 70 Cuban doctors and nurses started working in Trinidad and Tobago, joining Cuban medical professionals already in the country.
- 16 This brigade of Cuban medical professionals includes fourteen (14) doctors and fifty-six (56) nurses. The fourteen doctors comprise 11 general practice physicians who will serve in the public health system's primary care facilities and one (1) ENT Specialist, one (1) Nephrologist and one (1) Paediatrician who would serve within the hospital system. The nurses' specialities range from Intensive Care nursing to neonatal and community nursing.
- 17 This programme not only provides important assistance in strengthening the public health

care system in Trinidad and Tobago, but it also assists in developing positive exchanges between the Cuban medical brigades in the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

18 SPORT

19 In a bilateral agreement between Trinidad and Tobago's *Ministry of Sport* and Cuba's *National Institute of Sport, Physical Education and Recreation (CubaDeportes)*, nine (9) Cuba coaches started working in Trinidad and Tobago in 2011. This was a continuation of an existing exchange programme between the two countries.

20 The team represents six sporting disciplines of Boxing, Indoor Volleyball, Beach Volleyball, Judo, Hurdles and Sprints, Jumps and Sprints and Heptathlon and Hurdles.

21 The value of this programme is reflected in Trinidad and Tobago's success at the 2012 Olympics where a Gold Medal was achieved in the men's javelin. The coach of Keshorn Walcott, the Gold Medalist, was Cuban.

22 NATURAL DISASTERS

23 The Caribbean is subject to natural disasters, primarily hurricanes which can cause major devastation.

24 The success of the Cuban model of civil defence, evacuation and proactive response to natural disasters provides an important example for countries like Trinidad and Tobago which have potentially more resources but are not as well organised to respond to catastrophic events such as hurricanes and flooding.

25 CULTURAL EXCHANGES

26 Cultural exchanges have taken place between Cuba and Trinidad and Tobago, particularly around the development of pan – the national musical instrument of Trinidad and Tobago.

27 These cultural exchanges have resulting a strengthening ties between the two countries at both Governmental and civil society level.

28 TRADE UNION SOLIDARITY

29 Through the *Central de Trabajadores de Cuba (CTC)*, the Cuban trade union centre, training courses have been provided for trade union officials from Latin America and the Caribbean on a range of issues, including economics, workers rights, globalisation.

30 The contribution of the CTC in strengthening ties between working people in the region has been important, and was one of the major factors in defeating the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), which would have had serious economic consequences for developing countries in the region.

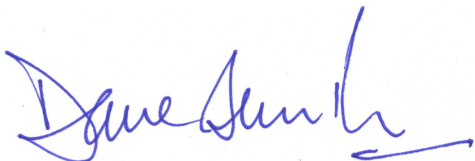
31 BLOCKADE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

32 The development of Cuba since its achievement of independence following the successful revolution in 1959 has been hampered by the fifty year blockade by the United States of America.

33 The contributions of Cuba and the exchanges referred to in this submission are against a background of economic difficulties imposed by the United States of America and make Cuba's contributions in the fields of health, education and sport even more significant.

34 The *National Workers Union* has no hesitation in condemning the US Blockade which is a major attack on human rights in Cuba.

Submitted on behalf of the National Executive Committee
of the National Workers Union

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Dave Smith', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Dave Smith

General Secretary

7th October 2012