



PRESS RELEASE

OPEN SPACE MEETING INUNDATED BY PROTESTING SEAMEN

More than thirty members of the Guyana Seafarer's and General Workers Union (GS&GWU) showed up on Saturday last at the Policy Forum Guyana(PFG) Open Space meeting on Oil & Gas held at the New Amsterdam Technical Institute. Their concern was to protest what they claim is discriminatory treatment by Exxon- contracted companies. The main purpose of the PFG event, in keeping with similar meetings held in Georgetown and Linden, was to afford New Amsterdam citizens an opportunity to express their opinions on how oil revenues could be best use to create a future that all Guyanese could embrace and promote.

Given the single focus of the GS&GWU, a separate grouping was created in which the matter was discussed at length.

The main frustration of the seafarers focused on Trinidad seamen being given systematic preference over qualified Guyanese to jobs on the oil rig and related work. This came about, it was alleged, because Exxon has sub-contracted the hiring of seamen to Ram's Logistics, a Trinidadian –owned firm which in turn largely hires from three other Trinidadian firms with offices here.

Jobs are advertised in the newspapers, the men allege, but when Guyanese apply, they rarely get picked. Advertised jobs include able-bodies seamen (AB) ordinary sailors (OS0 captains, mates , engineers and riggers. Many Guyanese seafarers qualified in all of these positions, with years of experience in the oil industry in the Caribbean and the Middle East are not getting jobs.

TheGS&GWU claim some 2000 qualified seamen are available in New Amsterdam alone. Photo were displayed of a meeting held with the Minister of Public Infrastructure, from which they claim no satisfaction resulted.

The GS&GWU, formed in march 2018 wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs because the discrimination which they allege is taking place is primarily rooted in Trinidadians being hired on more favourable terms than Guyanese. Wage rates paid to Trinidadians for the same work

are higher than those paid to Guyanese. Other grievances relate to the payment and non-payment of taxes, foreign hires being paid in foreign currency, while Guyanese are paid in Guyanese currency and preferential travel arrangements for Trinidadians.

They further allege that Trinidadians are allowed to work in Guyana without possessing a Guyanese work permit, whereas all Guyanese seamen are required to obtain a Work Permit as a condition of being allowed to obtain employment in Trinidad.

A further disparity relates to the contracts issued to work on the Exxon rig, compared to the practice on Trinidadian rigs. Local contracts are only for one month (28 days) on and 28 days off. When a man is called back he signs a new contract. Trinidadian contracts are for three months.

The group was particularly incensed over an incident which had happened a few days prior to their showing up at the Oil & Gas meeting, which they allege illustrates the tendency to disparage Guyanese. A seaman in New Amsterdam received a call 'immediately' to the Georgetown office. However, when he got to the office he was told his job had gone to a Trinidadian. He was not hired.

The meeting ended with assurances that documentary evidence to substantiate the allegations would be provided to the Guyana Human Rights Association in the coming week.

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