

NEED TO LEARN FROM GARVEY - SIMPSON

KINGSTON, Aug. 24 (JAMPRESS):

Labour, Welfare and Sport Minister, Portia Simpson, has come out against the lack of support on the part of trade unions, given to the inaugural lecture in the Marcus Garvey Lecture Series, pointing to the continuing relevance of Garvey's philosophy and the stature of the man, not only as a national hero, but as one of international proportions.

Stressing that "it is time in Jamaica that we begin to call a spade a spade", Miss Simpson expressed disappointment at the absence of many trade unionists at the opening lecture.

She was delivering the opening address at the lecture held at the University of the West Indies yesterday.

The Minister further informed the Trade Union Education Institute (TUEI), organisers of the series, that invitations should have been tendered to a wider cross-section of the public.

"By ignoring the priceless legacy which the teachings and experiences of Garvey comprises, we have not mined the acres of diamonds in our own backyard," she observed, referring to the search of the peoples of the region for answers to the questions of development.

There were important lessons to tackle the current challenges that could be gleaned from Garveyism, Miss Simpson emphasised, noting that the National Hero had seen the potential for greatness in the black race and articulated a vision of liberation in the heyday of colonialism at a time when the self-confidence of the black man was at its lowest point.

Consequently, by establishing the Garvey Lecture Series, TUEI was officially recognising the pioneering contribution of Garvey to the development of an organised labour movement at home and further afield, she observed.

The series therefore symbolised the building of bridges between past and present, scholarship and experience, the Minister declared.

She recognised the contribution of Professor the Hon. Rex Nettleford as a home-grown scholar, hailing him as "a consistent post-war Caribbean voice for a genuine Caribbean scholarship that is relevant to the needs, hopes and struggles of the ordinary man and woman".

This concern, she noted, was reflected in his central role in the development and achievements of the Trade Union Education Institute.

The Labour Minister also paid tribute to Amy Jacques Garvey, wife of the National Hero, for her commitment to the ideals for which her husband stood, as well as for her own pioneering work in exposing the breadth of his scholarship to Jamaican and international audiences.

Turning to the labour movement, Miss Simpson remarked that it needed a new impetus and direction which called for the creation of "a new frame of reference for contemporary times".

Pointing to Garvey's continuing relevance, she recalled that as early as the turn of the century, a then 19 year old Garvey had led a strike of printers, establishing his vision of workers' rights.

She urged the organisers of the lecture series to ensure that the ideas they disseminated would serve to strengthen the qualities and attributes Garvey espoused, among them faith in the potential of the black race, courage to challenge the status-quo, a firm belief in self-reliance and a passion for social and economic justice for workers.

The lecture, she urged, should never fail to inspire positive action.