

Presentation by *Mrs. Myrtle Palacio*

**84<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting  
Public Service Union (PSU), Belize  
Machaca, Toledo District  
June 17, 2006**

*“Public Service Union: Advocating for Good Governance to Secure People-Centered Development”*

**INTRODUCTION**

Please accept my congratulations--leaders and members of the Public Service Union, on this your 84<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting. I must commend you for your choice of venue. It demonstrates sensitivity to inclusiveness in that you have come **all** the way to the “out districts”, to what is often mis-interpreted as the forgotten district. For it is widely assumed that a transfer to Toledo is like banishment to Siberia. However, you will agree with me, whether it is only to agree to disagree, that the South is still the best part of the country.

Thank you for including me in your programme today. It is an honour to have the opportunity to share my thoughts with fellow Public Officers on some meaningful concepts emanating from the theme.

The theme “Public Service Union: Advocating for Good Governance to secure People Centered Development” is timely indeed, as we approach 25 years of post-independent Belize—25 years of change, 25 years of growth . . . .

- Land reform in the North
  - subdivision of large tracts of land from BEC to Farmers
- home ownership, 65%
- Tertiary level education in every district
- Public Officers conducted a very peaceful—3 elections in one day
- In Toledo
  - Infrastructure---roads, bridges, electricity
  - High school from Village to Town

. . . . 25 years of development.

The key concepts, advocacy, good governance, people centered are concepts that are interrelated, and centered on development, centered on change. I will, define the concepts; analyze how the concepts support one another, and the linkage to the “People”.

Firstly, who are the “People”? The Public Service Union is an organization formed for the purpose of “serving its members”—its people. The very existence of its members is to serve its customers, the people of Belize. The people then are **you, me, us. You as Public Officers and members of the PSU and Us as Belizeans.**

## **ADVOCACY**

Advocacy assumes that all groups in a society can have some impact on a certain position. Advocacy is the communication of that position, and seeks through various communication strategies that bring people together to participate in changing that position. Therefore advocacy is a communication to bring about change, a communication in development. In 2005, the Public Service Union took a stand on certain positions, among other things, to increase in wages. To do so members had to be in favour of issues surrounding the increased wages. Its leaders pleaded on behalf of its membership utilizing various tools, methods, tactics, etc. and brought the members together to participate in bringing about that change. The desire for that change was communicated through advocacy. You are advocates!!! Similarly the lawyer, the environmentalists are advocates pleading for and on behalf of their people.

## **PEOPLE CENTERED DEVELOPMENT**

People-centered, People-centric development or P-CED, places people at the centre of development. P-CED is an approach in development that focuses on the processes of human and social development of individuals or groups. It is participatory and the primary desire or outcome is the achievement of independence and self reliance of the developing person or group. Instead of providing resources to bring about change to the individual's physical environment, P-CED focuses on the processes of interaction in human relationships---on the processes of thinking, action, reflection and learning. Therefore, P-CED development practitioners provide opportunities to develop resourcefulness and self-reliance by targeting people's efforts to understand the dynamics of their current reality. In this approach, the people are actors and co-creators of their own circumstance. Remember the saying—“*Show a man how to fish?*”

As an economic development approach P-CED places economic success beyond the line of profitability as it defines profit in human terms rather than purely in terms of financial gain alone. P-CED holds that a fair measure is how many people benefit by way of profitability, by including human and social concerns when analyzing profit. Toward this end P-CED advocates for the need for information:

- A comprehensive and easily accessible information source
- Timely reports that are easily understood

In other words, not only that accountability and transparency is a must, but also the fact that knowledge is POWER. For People to take the drivers role in their development, they need to be armed with reliable, timely information.

## **GOOD GOVERNANCE**

“Australian Government's Overseas Aid Program (AusAID), defines governance as the exercise of power or authority—political, economic, administrative or otherwise—to manage a country's resources and affairs.”

Each and every one of us as Public Officers exercise authority or power—from the Office assistant to the CEO.

“UNDP defines governance as the exercise of political, economic, and administrative authority in the management of a country’s affairs...whose dimensions are transparency, rule of law, responsiveness, efficiency, accountability, and strategic vision.”

Do we have a strategic vision? IF NOT, WHY? Who will do it for us?

“The Commonwealth Administration Reform 2003 that in public management, governance is viewed as an aspect of the new paradigm on public administration which emphasizes the role of public managers in providing **high quality services** that citizens value, and demands for **measures and rewards** for both organizational and individual performance.”

“The Jamaican Public Service defines governance as the exercise of power of the country’s resources through economic, political and administrative management, with some elements of good governance as: openness, justice, accountability, inclusiveness.”

“The Office of Governance defines governance as the competent management of resources and business in a manner that is transparent, accountable and responsive, with four key principles of good governance, namely, accountability, transparency/openness, inclusiveness and Justice.” We are advocating for:

- Accountability is the provision of timely information and reporting of on-going activities (questions)
- Transparency and Openness is ensuring that information is accessible and that objectives and expectations are clear (questions)
- Inclusiveness ensures that all members feel that they have a stake
- Justice is respect to the rule of law, and a fair legal framework (PSR)

What then, may I ask, is our stewardship as public officers? What would be our report card if we are to be evaluated by our customers? Similarly, I could ask the same question of the Public Service Union. Why is it so difficult to give credit where it is due—show value to our human resource our people? As the song says, there may be more questions than answers.

The terms Governance and good governance are being increasingly used in development literature. Governance describes the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented **or not** implemented. Public officers in public institutions conduct public affairs, manage public resources and guarantee the realization of efficient service delivery by practicing good governance principles. The characteristics of good governance assure that corruption is minimized, free of abuse, and that the views of the people are heard. It defines an ideal which is oftentimes difficult to achieve in its totality; however, to ensure sustainable development, actions must be taken to work towards this ideal.

As the Office responsible for human resource management and development, we at the Office of Governance are advocating for a knowledge base Public Service, the modernization of our systems, the recognition of value when and where it is due---there is now a merit award policy, lets implement it; skills base developmental training, be a part of it; A website of information on the Public Service, contribute to it. For the first time this year, Belize joins other UN member states in celebrating International Public Service Day countrywide—361 public Officers will be recognized publicly for long service. There was no budget but we persevered through your determination and the support of other community organizations.

## **CONCLUSION**

Three values serve as the organizing principles of P-CED, namely justice, inclusiveness and sustainability. These values are also embraced by Good Governance practices. At the same time good governance principles also embraces advocacy, which must be non-deceptive and in good faith.

Being people-centered isn't just something we say, it's something we must try to work into everything we do. Similarly, good governance is all encompassing in every aspect of our work as Public Officers.

We are living and working in a more demanding environment. Let us as Public Officers account to those who will be affected by our decisions and actions; produce results that meet the needs of society while making the best use of resources at our disposal; and serve all stakeholders within a reasonable time frame.

We are living and working in a changing environment, let us make this Public service a bulwark of stability.

- Treat people as a balance sheet asset
- Reward success & punish wrong
- Achieve widespread accountability

Let's do right by PEOPLE!!!!

Please accept my best wishes for a productive and enjoyable Annual General Meeting.  
Thank you!!! One Love!!!

***Myrtle Palacio***  
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