

GOVERNOR REFUSES TO DISCUSS LABOUR PROTEST WITH FAWKES

Labour to Hold Mass Meeting in Protest

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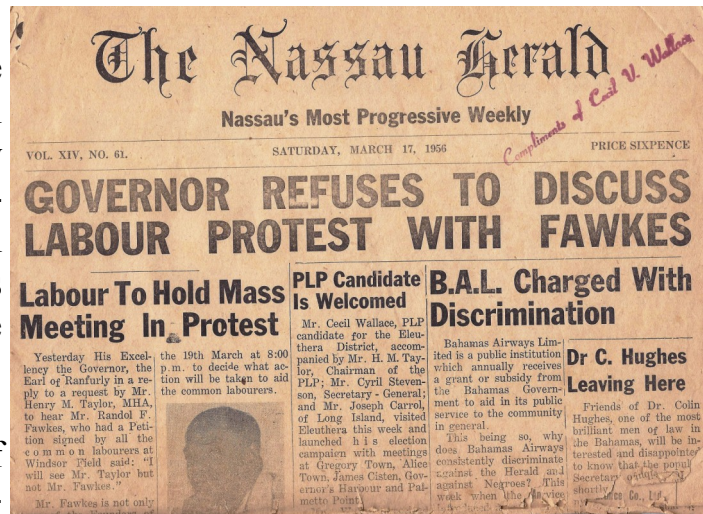
Yesterday His Excellency, the Governor, the Earl of Ranfurly, in a reply to a request by Mr. Henry M. Taylor M.H.A. to hear Mr. Randol Fawkes, who had a petition signed by all the common labourers at Windsor Field said, "I will see Mr. Taylor but not Mr. Fawkes."

Mr. Fawkes is not only one of the founders of The Bahamas Federation of Labour but also the attorney to whom all the common labourers at the International Airport had appealed for help in their fight against unfair labour conditions enforced by Messrs. Higgs and Hill and their sub-contractors.

Major Harding, the Governor's Aide-de-Camp, requested the member of the House of Assembly, Mr. Taylor, to discuss the Windsor Field labour dispute with His Excellency in Mr. Fawkes' absence; but Mr. Taylor told Major Harding that he was not fully conversant with the facts and "since the Governor will not see Mr. Fawkes there is no necessity for His Excellency to see me."

With these words Mr. Taylor, the Chairman of the P.L.P., politely declined the invitation and cancelled his former appointment with the Governor for 12:30p.m.

The Bahamas Federation of Labour in collaboration with the Progressive Liberal Party will hold a mass meeting on the Southern Recreation Grounds on Monday the 19th March at 8:00p.m. to decide what action will be taken to aid the common labourers. Mr. Fawkes told *The Herald* that he will move a resolution censoring the Governor for failing to see a representative of labour.



According to Mr. Fawkes, the exchange reported above was mild when compared with an encounter between Fawkes and the Governor on the 28 February, 1956. At this time, these two gentlemen really crossed swords.

On this day Mr. Fawkes marched alone on Government Hill and demanded his Notary Public License.

His Excellency demanded that Mr. Fawkes immediately leave the premises.

Mr. Fawkes bluntly refused until he had been assured that his Notary Public License would be delivered to him on that day and no later.

This time the A.D.C., the secretary and the Governor's whole entourage came out and asked Mr. Fawkes to leave but this time Mr. Fawkes, like a bull let loose in a china closet, paced the floor and indignantly replied: "I will not go."

The Attorney General was contacted; also the Colonial Secretary, the Hon. F.M. Noad. At this time Mr Fawkes dispatched a note with a union taxi-driver to Mr. Edgar R. Bain.

Later the telephone rang in Government House. This time it was for Mr. Fawkes. It was Dr. Jackson L. Burnside calling. Mr. Fawkes dictated to the doctor from Government House specific and strategic instructions.

Two minutes later, Mr. Fawkes emerged from the Governor's Executive Council Chamber with the assurance that his Notary Public License will be delivered to him by the Colonial Secretary at 4:30p.m.

At 4 o'clock, Mr. Fawkes called at the Secretariat and was immediately handed the Notary Public Licence.

Today the document stands in Mr. Fawkes' law office on East Street as eloquent testimony of this man's implacable courage and determination to fight for what is right.

Mr. Fawkes told a representative of The Herald today that the rights of the workers at Windsor Field will be fought for with no less courage and determination.

He said, "On the issue of the workers' rights we must be as bold as truth and as uncompromising as justice. On the subject of human rights, we must not equivocate, we must not vacillate, we must not speak or write with moderation. We must not retreat a single inch. We must fight this tyranny with everything in us or be destroyed by it. With God and courage we can win this struggle for liberty. Without God and without faith we will lost the next hundred years."

However the Governor did not see Mr. Taylor or Mr. Fawkes Friday. The petition which these two gentlemen would have formally presented is quoted in full below so that you, the readers of *The Herald*, may know the truth and draw your own conclusions.

"We the undersigned Common Labourers, Labour Foremen and Jack Hammer Operators, with an abiding faith in the enduring wisdom of Her Majesty's Representative do hereby humbly pray your Excellency's earnest attention to the under-mentioned facts:

"That the unfair labour practices of Messrs. Higgs & Hill and their subcontractors during the construction of the International Airport at Windsor Field are so brutal and inhumane that no common labourer can work there long with satisfaction.

"That the undersigned are paid no more that 2/6 per hour out of which they must rent bicycles for £1.0.0 per day, provide nourishment for their bodies to enable them to perform the heaviest of duties, feed their wives and families and pay house rent.

"That the above wage scale for Common Labour paid by Messrs. Higgs & Hill and their subcontractors has deprived the undersigned of the dignity that is usually associated with human labour by reducing them to the category of slaves.

"That one of the Jack Hammer Operators fainted in the hole because of fatigue brought on by long hours, low wages, lack of nourishment, bodily weakness, all on by the crude labour conditions enforced by the bosses at the International Airport. That this said Jack Hammer Operator, Gerald Montell, was summarily dismissed.

"That the undersigned have made representations to the employers Messrs. Higgs & Hill and their subcontractors but they have been ignored.

“That the undersigned have made formal representations to the Labour Board for four days but their plea for justice has not been given the courtesy of a hearing.

“That the denial of Messrs. Higgs & Hill and their Subcontractors of the right of the undersigned to organize and their refusal to accept the procedure of collective bargaining recommended to them by The Bahamas Federation of Labour and also by an affiliate member of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions at Kingston, Jamaica, B.W.I. may lead not only to a strike but to great social unrest.

“That before appealing to the Executive Board of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions for help, we are praying to you, Your Excellency, to use the influence of your high office to restore justice and fair play in the execution of the works at Windsor Field in order that at least one of our airports in New Providence may be remembered for its cooperation between Government, Management and Labour.”

The Herald has no further comment to make except to add an appropriate paraphrase of the words of the Great Master when he said, “Inasmuch as you have not done it unto one of these, my little children, you have not done it unto me.”