

## Trishka Humes -- Sir Randol Fawkes Scholarship Essay

Describe the plight of the worker in 1955 when Sir Randol made an appeal to them to unite under the banner of The Bahamas Federation of Labour. What benefits did he claim unionization could offer them? Finally what was the role of The Bahamas Federation of Labour in the General Strike of 1958?

In 1955, injustice in the Bahamas had reached its highest peak. This was most evident in the many restrictions placed on Bahamian workers, which essentially amounted to modern day slavery. As in the days before the abolition of slavery, so it was for the poor, black Bahamian. While the rich whites had access to gainful employment in any sector of society, blacks were fenced in by discrimination and inequality, resulting in employment with more menial tasks. While gainful employment equated to a higher standard of living for whites, having to work in a less prestigious position meant hardship and poverty for blacks. When a white became ill, access to proper medical facilities went without saying; as for the blacks, continued ailment was the order of the day. These and many other injustices helped the Bahamian to public to make a decision when Mr. Randol Fawkes, in a series of articles on Labour Unions made every effort to encourage the populace to unite. He mesmerized them with the many benefits of unionization that would eventually turn their 'darkness of injustice' into the 'light of labour equality'. Some of these benefits included health insurance for union members, protection against unjust dismissal from the job, a guarantee of fair wages commensurate with the level of work given and a promise of an overall higher standard of living. After being persuaded to come together as one union, the birth of The Bahamas Federation of Labour took place in 1955. With this greater level of influence, Sir Randol went on to make a marked impact on other unions because of the strength of his union. One of the most notable successes was the achievement of "labor reform" during the General Strike of 1958. Although the Taxi Cab Union was the official executive body, operating on behalf of its members, their efforts in the fight against loss of business were to no avail until they entreated the assistance of the Bahamas Federation of Labour. Sir Randol put forth the brilliant idea of holding a strike, which came at a good time because it would epitomize the tremors of injustice being felt throughout the Bahamas by members of the working class. The events of the strike proved as being very successful as major breakthroughs in the context of Bahamian labour took place afterward. Thank God for giving Sir Randol the wisdom to lead and the strength to succeed in whatever he put his hands forth to do!