

OPPOSITION CONCERNED OVER DECLINING NUMBERS OF BARBADIANS AT UWI

The Opposition Barbados Labour Party continues to be extremely concerned and perturbed over the continuing decline in the number of Barbadian students who have been able to enter the University of the West Indies campuses within the last two years. Barbadian student enrollment declined by a huge 40 per cent in the first year after the Government imposed tuition fees on our citizens starting from the academic year 2014-2015. We now have the frightening situation where the Cave Hill campus is reporting that less than 1,100 Barbadians have been able to register in courses for this semester after 2,500 qualified citizens had been accepted. The remaining 1,400 qualified persons or 57 per cent are not going to be able to attend UWI this semester after 50 years of political independence, due to lack of money to pay the tuition fees which have been harshly imposed by the DLP Government.

This extremely worrisome situation is compounded by the fact that Minister Ronald Jones had promised that no Barbadian would be unable to attend UWI due to lack of funds. It is even more astonishing since the Minister had initially announced students' access to bursaries to assist in this funding. Thereafter, in last year's June budgetary proposals, the Finance Minister announced that \$5 million would have been available in scholarships and grants to aid Barbadians with their tuition fees.

Instead, it appears that the bursaries, the grants and the scholarships are presently non-existent. Furthermore, the Government's funding facilities do not possess the financial capacity to lend for the time being.

In all of this, these persons, mainly young Barbadians, have not even received any word of hope or encouragement from either Minister Jones or from Acting Minister Harcourt Husbands.

We urge those successful applicants who have been unable to take up their positions at the University not to give up hope and not to despair. We encourage you to seek alternative funding during the next three months although it means delaying your acceptance by at least a semester. Do not give up on your laudable dreams and aspirations merely due to the unfortunate reality which presently exists as a result of an erroneous policy by the DLP administration.

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