

Hotel Union Threatens Legal Action In Lyford Cay Uproar

By Rolanda Epstein

Bahamas Hotel Catering and Allied Workers Union President Roy Colebrooke said yesterday that employees of the Lyford Cay Club could no longer work with General Manager Didier Picquot, in a continuation of a saga that escalated last week into the union filing an official complaint with the Department of Labour.

Now the hotel union is considering legal action in relation to an uproar that took place at the property last week involving two of the union's executives.

The union has already actually filed a list of complaints with various government departments as workers continue to lament the environment under which they are operating at the exclusive gated property. Mr. Colebrooke lamented yesterday that nothing substantial has been done as a result.

During a press conference, the hotel union head said Mr. Picquot had even sought to dictate which executive officers with whom he does not want to negotiate.

"This we say is a no, no and say to [Mr. Picquot] he has no authority in this country under the laws to do such a thing," said Mr. Colebrook.

"We want to remind [Mr. Picquot] again this is The Bahamas and we will not go back to the dark days."

Mr. Colebrooke claimed that Lyford Cay workers are working under even harsher conditions and the hotel union is having a difficult time resolving the issues that have been emerging.

Last week, Secretary General of the hotel union Leo Douglas and Kirk Wilson, first vice president of the hotel union, claimed that they were at the property waiting for a meeting with the human resource's manager when security officers tried to intimidate them by ordering them to leave and attempting to release their canines.

Mr. Douglas claimed that no manager came to their rescue. The uproar escalated into the police being called.

Department of Labour officials launched an immediate investigation following the incident and the parties involved also met that night.

Mr. Douglas had vowed that the union would not stop its agitation until Mr. Picquot was removed from the country, indicating that there are simply too many complaints from the staff members at the club about poor treatment at the hands of the manager and constant harassment.

Yesterday, Mr. Colebrooke said no one in management at the club had apologized to union officers.

The union leader said he plans to meet with the Minister of Labour [Dion Foulkes] to ensure that action is taken on the matter.

"The minister himself needs to be involved in the meeting with these people [employees at Lyford Cay Club] so he could hear for himself what is going on at the property. We do not want him to hear second hand information because the matter has escalated," Mr. Colebrook said.

Mr. Douglas said Chairman of the Lyford Cay Club Hampton Davis addressed a letter to Director of the Department of Labour Harcourt Brown explaining what took place at the resort on the day of the melee. Mr. Davis explained that officials felt the need to call security because of a breach of security and he extended regrets to the department for the matter, he said.

"We are thinking about what legal action we can take. Because this is serious, no apology was sent to the union and that was unacceptable."