

June 12th, 2008

New BUT President Elected

By **TOSHEENA ROBINSON-BLAIR**

It took all night to tally the votes. In the wee morning hours Wednesday, it finally became clear that the 4,000-strong Bahamas Union of Teachers (BUT) had a new leader.

Outgoing BUT Secretary General Belinda Wilson ousted incumbent president Ida Poitier-Turnquest to capture the top post.

She not only unseated Mrs. Poitier-Turnquest, but also beat Grand Bahama's area vice president Frances Friend and H.O. Nash Senior Master Byron Small.

Ms. Wilson became emotional during a short speech she made around 1:30am Wednesday at the union's headquarters on Bethel Avenue.

"Belinda Wilson along with the next executive team will leave a legacy in the BUT unmatched by any executive committee you have ever seen," the newly elected president pledged.

Mrs. Poitier-Turnquest presented the new president with her capital plan for the union.

It is one Ms. Wilson said she would draw on.

"I intend to use it along with some of the other ideas that we will put together in a strategic plan as a new executive team," she advised.

"Like she said, if I need her help I will call on her. I have no problems doing that."

Ms. Wilson thanked those union members who worked tirelessly on her behalf.

"I really need you now because the work begins right now. It's going to take each and every member to play a role," she said.

The new president told supporters who gathered at the headquarters not to "talk behind my back" if she makes an error.

"Find your way to the office and say, 'Ms. Wilson, you need to correct this, [or] you need to do better with that, or you're doing better over here,'" she said.

"Do what you need to do to assist me in becoming the best that I can be for this union."

The BUT elections took place amid a police probe into allegations of misappropriation of union funds.

In all, 46 candidates offered themselves for the 15 positions that were up for grabs.

The results follow: Vice President Adeltis Bain-Stubbs; Secretary General Stephen McPhee; Treasurer Janice Ambrister; Assistant Treasurer Andrea Lockhart; Trustee Margaret Albury; Area Vice President for New Providence Bridget Seymour; Area Vice President for Grand Bahama Quinton Laroda; Area Vice President for the Northern Bahamas Yolanda Curry and Area Vice President for the Southern Bahamas Annafaye Knowles