

March resignations possible warns UWI campus principal

By JOHN KASSIE

A SPATE of resignations can be expected in March this year at the St Augustine campus of the University of the West Indies (UWI) if the current salary impasse with the West Indies Group of University Teachers (WIGUT), is not satisfactorily settled.

Professor Max Richards, Pro Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the campus, when asked to comment on the outcome of talks held with the Inter-Ministerial Committee, said current terms and conditions applicable to all levels of academic and senior administrative staff are simply not good enough to retain staff members.

Minister Winston Dookeran, who is chairman of the Inter-Ministerial Committee and Selby Wilson, Minister of Finance, held discussions with Professor Richards and a team comprising Professor Compton Bourne, Deputy Principal, Zaffar Ali, Academic Registrar and Lennox Darmanie, Acting Bursar, last on Friday.

"It was a useful meeting and we felt that the Ministers gave a sympathetic hearing to the information offered with respect present salaries and allowances received by academic staff at the Mona and Cave Hill campuses," he added.

While Professor Richards was confident that the Inter-Ministerial team would provide funds early in the new year to facilitate a settlement, he said any further loss of staff will place the university "in jeopardy."

He provided up-to-date figures on the present staff situation, disclosing that there were 61 vacancies to be filled out of an establishment of 384. In addition, there are 27 staffers on special leave, many of whom are not likely to return to their positions at the university.

One of the most recent losses at UWI, is Professor Julien Kenny, Head of the Department of Zoology who opted for retirement in July last, and was being retained on a month-to-month basis.

Advertisements for that vacant position have been circulated, and an offer made to an overseas applicant, but it is not known whether it will be accepted, Professor Richards stated, adding that the United Kingdom and USA salaries at the professorial level are two and a half times that of St Augustine.

He revealed further that several positions at the professorial level have been vacant for almost four years. The departments affected are Management Studies, Computer Science, Land Surveying, Statistics and several in the Faculty of Medical Sciences.