

Employers' Consultative Association of Trinidad and Tobago



# of Trinidad and Tobago

## **Our Vision**

To be the Premier Employers' Representative

## **Our Mission**

To advance Employers interests for the creation of optimum sustainable value for all stakeholders.

## **Our Mandate**

To provide employers with quality representation at the organizational, national and international levels in order to ensure the strength and success of the employer community for the socio-economic well-being of the nation.



The ECA was established on February 16, 1960 to match the strength of the trade union movement and to advise employers on industrial relations matters towards improving the then prevailing state of affairs. Over the years, the ECA developed a pivotal role in tripartism, facilitating smooth labour relations by representing employers at the national, regional and international levels and assisting in national development, formulating policies and shaping legislation.

From its inception, the ECA has been consistent with the progression of labour and industrial relations in Trinidad and Tobago. The ECA has developed a very close working relationship with various local bodies sharing an interest in labour related matters. The Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development and Trade Unions in particular are two bodies with which the ECA works very closely since the Association's expertise and experience in the area of industrial relations are recognized by these groups. In fact, prior to 1965 the ECA and the T&T National Trade Union Congress attempted to voluntarily agree on an Industrial Relations Charter to help resolve the IR problems facing the country.

Now, in its 54th year, the ECA functions in an educational, advisory, representative and regulative capacity with respect to employers' interests. Industrial Relations remains the mainstay of the organization, however, the adoption of a proactive approach has enabled the Association to not only provide guidance and/or consultancy in the areas of IR and human resource management, but also occupational safety and health, HIV/AIDS etc. The Association also conducts various awareness building seminars/meetings on topical issues affecting employers.



The Employers Solution Centre (ESC) is a Subsidiary of the Employers' Consultative Association of Trinidad and Tobago (ECA) – the Company which has been providing Employers with quality representation at the organizational, national and international levels since 1959.

The Employers Solution Centre was established in January 2008 and is the business arm of the ECA. The highly qualified staff of the ESC is ready and willing to find solutions for clients especially in the areas of Industrial Relations, Training and Development and Human Resource Management.

## **OUR YISION**

To be the leading authority on all business solutions.

## **OUR MISSION**

To deliver customized solutions that are best practice and will significantly improve business organisations particularly in the areas of Industrial Relations, Human Resource Management and Training and Development.

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## 54th AGM/Breakfast Meeting Realizing Your Organization's True Competitive Advantage



Feature Address by: Mr. Richard Lewis Chairman of the Trinidad and Tobago Government Advisory Council for Competitiveness & Innovation

Hilton Trinidad and Conference Centre Thursday 27th March, 2014 7:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

To make a reservation, please call Annette Joseph at 675-9388 ext 222



Employers' Consultative Association of Trinidad and Tobago

## **NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

Notice is hereby given that the 54th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Employers' Consultative Association of Trinidad and Tobago (ECA) will be held on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> March, 2014 at 7:30 a.m. at the La Boucan, Hilton Trinidad and Conference Centre, Lady Young Road, Port of Spain for the following purposes:

#### **AGENDA**

- 1. Reading of the Notice convening the Meeting
- 2. Chairman's Address
- 3. Minutes of the 54th Annual General Meeting
- 4. Executive Director's Report
- 5. Auditor's Report
- 6. Revision of the General Bye Law of the ECA
- 7. Financial Statements
- 8. Appointment of the Auditor for 2014
- 9. Election of Directors
- 10. Other Business
- 11. Vote of Thanks

By order of the Board of Directors Employers' Consultative Association of Trinidad and Tobago Linda M. Besson Executive Director/ Secretary









Keston Nancoo ECA Chairman



Suzetta Ali ECA Vice Chairman



Linda Besson Executive Director/ Corporate Secretary



Ruben McSween ECA Director



Martin de Gannes ECA Director



Neil Derrick ECA Director



Dexter Charles ECA Director



W.A Hilton ECA Director



Lennon Ballah Lashley ECA Director



Gwendoline Mc Laren ECA Director



Imran Khan ECA Director



Narendra Kirpalani ECA Director



Farzan Ali ECA Director



Russell George ECA Director



Henley Harewood ECA Director



Joy Ramlogan ECA Director



Grace Maharaj ECA Director



Glenn Maharaj ESC Chairman



Dane Darbasie ESC Director



Martin de Gannes ESC Director



Neil Derrick ESC Director



Imran Khan ESC Director



Linda Besson Executive Director/ Corporate Secretary





## Keston Nancoo ECA Chairman Chairman's Remarks

"The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands in times of challenge and controversy"-

- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Some three weeks after my appointment to the position of Chairman of the Employers Consultative Association, I did an exclusive interview with the Trinidad Guardian which spoke primarily on how I planned to take the ECA forward. Of even greater significance was my commitment to leaving a legacy where I would be remembered as someone who sought to build bridges that would foster and facilitate strong collaboration and cohesiveness among tripartite partners and key stakeholders, and an individual who provided strong Leadership and vision.

Evidence of this can be seen from my Labour Day messages, among the many others and including my presentation to the Social Dialogue Conference in June of 2012, which had as its theme, "Towards People-Centered Development- Social Dialogue as the Key Driver". During my tenure and even up to this present time, commentators the world over continue to describe the Global Economic environment as being fragile, and of even greater concern, is that the prospects are for a reduced level of growth for emerging economies as compared to pre-crisis levels. Furthermore, the uneven pace of recovery is a reflection of persistent imbalances in the global economy, which have been intensified and are obstacles to strong and sustained growth.

On the local front, we expect to see moderate growth in the economy as the Government continues to pursue structural reforms that would preserve fiscal sustainability, promote business competitive-



ness, and most importantly, promote public and private investment flows to support economic diversification.

As a consequence, the Board of the ECA, took the lead and established a series of breakfast meetings on the theme, "understanding the economic challenges," targeted to the private sector, and, in particular young entrepreneurs who own and operate businesses with the primary focus on assisting them to better understand the challenges of the economic landscape in which they were operating and to offer some guiding principles by which they could make better and more informed decisions that would lead to more profitable and sustainable businesses.

Just prior to that series, we launched a Leadership series entitled, "Resonant Leadership, Inspiring People, Creating Results", which was driven by the fact that the world over, people were, and are still, even up to today crying out for quality leadership.

In some quarters, there is a very strong view that the difficult times we are going through are in a large measure due to the inability of leaders to recognize that, if we are to begin to resolve the challenges of the Global Economic Crisis, there must be an alignment between the Logic of Politics and the Logic of Economics. International, Regional and local politics may well be the most significant obstacles to sustainable development. It would also appear to be the biggest hurdle to finding solutions, not only to the current Global crisis, but more importantly, for us to be able to overcome some of our local challenges. Getting the politics of development right, moreover sustainable development, requires greater levels of co-operation and co-ordination of priorities, policies and more dedicated and focused action at all levels in our society. More than ever, we are being called upon to think and act in new creative and innovative ways, with the clear understanding that good quality leadership is the key to successful Nation building The future needs women and men who are not afraid to travel the road less taken...... the road that requires vision and courage.



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#### **Key Initiatives Undertaken During my Tenure**

- The rebranding of the ECA. Persons surveyed confirmed that the ECA was not widely known and as I described it back then, we had lost our way. There was a need for us to rebrand and to get back to our original mandate of advocacy, and to reposition the organisation as the leaders in Industrial Relations. I will continue to work with the subject matter expert on the Board, Mr. Dexter Charles of First Citizens to bring closure before the end of the year.
- CORBOER is the acronym for Committee of Business Organisations on Employment Relationships, which is a group comprising the ECA and the various Chamber organisations which has as its mandate "To reform the Industrial Relations Climate and develop a way to bridge the gap with Trade Unions". This Group is a useful forum for distilling and providing views on key topics impacting Employers.
- Re-introduction of a National Apprenticeship Programme specifically targeted to youth unemployment and to deal with Labour shortages in various sectors of our economy. I have held a meeting with the Honorable Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, Mr. Errol Mc. Leod who has expressed his fullest support with moving this collaborative initiative between the ECA and his Ministry forward.

#### My wish list into the future

#### Youth Employment

The challenges around youth employment and under-employment carry a very high social and economic cost which has the potential to threaten the very fabric of our society. No longer can we afford to ignore the grim challenges that we face as a nation. Our Nation's youth is part of the solution. Their voices should be heard, their creativity engaged, and their rights respected in dealing with the challenges around youth employment and under-employment. Investing in the youth therefore is investing in the present and future of our society and, more importantly, we



need to recognize that they are the drivers of economic development in our country. Foregoing this potential therefore, is an economic waste. I am therefore suggesting that as we go forward, that this conversation should be part of the national agenda and more importantly among tripartite partners with a mandate to develop a set of policy responses that are multi-pronged, coherent and context specific.

#### **Building competencies for resilience**

In order to operationalize sustainable development, society needs to build competencies for resilience and entrepreneurship to enable enterprises to have access to the right skills for the jobs of the future.

Competitive economies require access to well- educated workforce with advanced skills, training, and differentiated expertise. What is even clearer is that technological innovation will feed directly into demand for skills in the labour market. It is one of the more worrying paradoxes of the current global crisis in labour markets that even in conditions of very high unemployment employers are unable to find the right skill sets to fill existing vacancies.

Accordingly, Government, Employers, Trade Unions, education and training providers and individuals must make mutually reinforcing efforts to deliver real improvements in basic education, as well as vocational and technical training and lifelong learning. We therefore need to build up our resources in this regard.

#### Sustainable Development Goal

#### **Public/Private Sector Initiative**

A healthy, vibrant and competitive private sector is a key to growth, poverty reduction and wealth creation. Policy makers must keep in mind that the private sector remains the engine of the economy and therefore must allow greater levels of flexibility for entrepreneurs and small businesses to pursue new ideas and create new opportunities. Of even greater significance is the fact that sustainable enterprises and entrepreneurial zeal are the foundations of future growth and development. There needs therefore to be a greater level of urgency and collaboration to move this process along.



#### **Social Dialogue**

I am convinced that this process is the key enabler if tripartite partners are to achieve socio-economic development, macro-economic stability, and sustainable economic growth with social equity. In this regard, I look forward to the cabinet appointed committee making meaningful progress over the next year on this very important conversation. Success here should see labour management relations moving from adversarial to building a partnership. This however would require, respect for roles by each partner and an understanding of the source of power and authority. Let's stop the loitering on the door steps of colonial thinking.

## Financial Performance of the ECA and ESC over the Period 2011-2013

The consolidated financial performance of the ECA and ESC over the period 2011 to 2013 was indeed significant, especially on the heels of a major loss by our subsidiary in 2010. Revenues have grown 7% compounded annually, from \$7.7 million in 2011 to \$8.9 million in 2013. While, assets have grown 32% compounded annually, from \$3.8 million in 2011 to \$6.6 million in 2013.

Having articulated my wish list for a better Trinidad and Tobago, may be the time has come for us to take a page out of the Taiwan's book. This country is a barren rock, with no natural resources. They have no oil, no iron ore, no forests, no diamonds, no gold, just a few small deposits of coal and natural gas. It is because of that, they developed the habits and culture of honing the skill of their people which turns out to be the most valuable and only truly renewable resource in the world today. Rather than digging in the ground and mining whatever comes up, Taiwan has mined its 23 million people, their talent, energy and intelligent men and women.



In conclusion, I could not have accomplished all of this without the fullest support of all the members of the Board, the Executive Director and members of staff to whom I wish to extend my heartfelt thanks and appreciation. To the many other key stake holders:

- My line minister, the Honorable Errol McLeod. Chairpersons of the respective Cabinet-appointed Committee on which I have the honour and privilege to sit and be allowed to make meaningful contributions;
- Minister of Tertiary Education, Senator the Honorable Fazal Karim;
- Minister of Finance and the Economy, Senator the Honorable Larry Howai;
- Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development, Senator the Honourable Dr. Bhoeindernath Tewarie.

To the incoming Chairman, Suzetta Ali, best wishes and God's grace and guidance for a successful term in office and be assured of my continued support and guidance.

Special thanks to all members for your support during my tenure. May God continue to bless and guide each and every one of you and your families and may God continue to bless our beloved nation.

"The tragedy of life is not death. The tragedy of life is commitment undefined; conviction undeclared and service unfulfilled."

- Vachel Lindsay





# Linda Besson ECA Executive Director Executive Director's Report

2013 was a relatively progressive year for most of the global economy. However, it was still a struggle for some, with the euro-zone remaining in the doldrums and the living standards of most of the developed countries still floating below the 2007 highs. Nonetheless, coming towards the latter half of the year the laggards began to catch up and the cyclical climb out of the recession continued in a slow but steady manner.

The Caribbean Region continued to face financial challenges as the Eastern Caribbean was severely hit by a slow-down in tourism. Barbados and Jamaica were down-graded by credit-rating agencies, S&P and Moody's as the threat of debt default loomed as their respective economies continued to face what many viewed as insurmountable challenges.

According to the International Monetary Fund's research statistics, the Trinidad and To-bago economy grew by 1.6% in 2013 as compared to 0.2% in 2012. The improvement was driven by additional off-shore oil and gas finds, infrastructure spending by the government, additional capital inflow by the major players in the energy space and continued buoyant activity in the highly liquid financial sector (First Citizens Bank IPO).

Citing the same report, the labour markets neither contracted nor expanded. The unemployment level remained at 5.4% in 2013 as in 2012. The loss of jobs in the finance sector (RBC restructuring) and mid-stream oil and gas space (National Petroleum Marketing) were counter balanced by increased jobs in the construction sector and the hydrocarbon exploration and production space. The energy sector continued to be the life-blood of the economy as the momentum of the 0.5% expansion experienced in 2012 (after four successive quarters of contraction) continued to be carried forward throughout the first and fourth quarters of 2013. The



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r€ in third quarter of 2013 experienced contractions in the energy sector and this was due to reduced output stemming from plant overhauls and maintenance work which were counter balanced by streamlined performance in the fourth quarter and the growth in earlier quarters of the year.

The Employers' Consultative Association of Trinidad and Tobago (ECA) and its subsidiary the Employers Solution Centre (ESC) take pride in their ability to remain at the forefront of all issues relating to labour relations in Trinidad and Tobago. By executing various practices within the ECA and ESC, 2013 gave way to even greater opportunities to target areas of significant interest to our loyal members. By keeping a close eye on not only the industrial relations/human resources climate of Trinidad and Tobago and neighbouring countries but also on the various economies throughout the Caribbean, the ECA and the ESC have been able to maintain essential partnerships, provide IR/HR consultations, as well as execute on-going training programmes and seminars on topical issues to keep the business community alert and abreast of what is expected of them as an Employer.

#### **Overall Industrial Relations Landscape:**

The Industrial Relations atmosphere continued to be contentious as the trends that were set in 2012 continued to spill over into 2013. The turbulent atmosphere was reflected in numerous disruptions across a myriad of industries including energy, telecommunications and construction. TSTT workers downed tools citing hazardous working conditions, Petrotrin employees were fired for abusing leave and tensions were high at National Petroleum Marketing Company as workers were deemed to be oppressively fired.

Employer-employee relations continued to be plagued by incumbent archaic approaches when it came to negotiations. The utilization of these methods continues to put parties against each other where mutual beneficial outcomes are over-shadowed by the stakeholders aiming to achieve self-centred maximum gain. The adoption of philosophies where most disputes are settled in the conciliation phase should be the main objective of all stakeholders. Positions of compromise where short term benefit is given up for the sake of setting the foundation for sustainable symbiotic labour relations need to become the order of the day or sub-optimal productivity will forever be the trending theme.

Modernization of the collective bargaining process needs to be expedited. A paradigm shift is essential if inflexibility, lack of creativity and non-existent desire to explore non-traditional solutions are to be eradicated from the collective bargaining process. The ECA continues to be an advocate for fostering meaningful discussions throughout the community that would result in all parties approaching the process in a fresh, innovative and ground breaking way. The aggressive approach where there must be a winner and a loser must be abandoned.

One key observation that the ECA has found in its research is the high percentage rate of employers falling on the unfavourable end of rulings in the Industrial Court. The immediate thought among employers is favouritism and bias towards unions. However, further investigation shows that many of the rulings go in favour of the employees because employers simply do not follow procedures and protocol. Simple things like documentation of employee tardiness, absenteeism and issuing of warning letters, result in lack of tangible evidence and create discrepancies when employers are presenting their respective cases. Apart from resulting in outcomes that may be "unjustified" it also sets terrible precedent for case law.

With a challenging economic environment as the backdrop, the ECA aims to continue being an advocate for change that will result in the improvement of the tumultuous relationship that exists between employers and employees. The ECA will strive to be a medium by which stakeholders can come together and have meaningful and amicable discussions to facilitate the much needed evolution of the collective bargaining process.

#### **Productivity**

There was a steady increase in retrenchment notices during the first ten months of 2013. Data from the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development reported a 16.5% increase in the number of retrenchment notices filed between January and October 2013 when compared to the corresponding period in 2012. One quarter of the notices were filed by firms in the finance, insurance, real estate and business services sector while 26.5% of the notices came from the distribution and petroleum sectors. The construction sector and the printing, publishing and paper converters sector accounted for 9.5% and 8.8% of the retrenchment notices.





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Despite the increased number of retrenchment notices in many of the sectors the index of hours worked increased. The oil and gas exploration sector showed an increase of 12% as the off-shore finds drove activity, while textile production showed an increase of 2%. It is important to note that as increased productivity becomes a more critical factor if Trinidad & Tobago is to remain competitive in the global market. We cannot afford to let a contentious labour relations environment TO add to an already challenging economic setting. This would lead to even further setbacks, higher opportunity costs and economic contraction.

#### Overview of 2013 – OPERATIONS

#### **Internal Initiatives**

While 2012 found the ECA in a new location, 2013 allowed for greater stability and progressive movement. The new location in Aranguez has continued to facilitate all of the ECA/ESC's needs. Our training rooms are deemed to be a success as the ESC not only utilizes this space frequently for training programmes but, the ECA also has found this space to be beneficial when hosting various seminars which frequently carry topics that directly facilitate our members' requests.

The ECA holds its members at a level of vital importance, therefore our staff is constantly in communication with representatives from our membership, so that we can best serve them. Frequent conversations are held with members to fully understand how the ECA can improve to satisfy their needs. This feedback is essential for the sustainability and growth of the organisation and we will continue this initiative as we enter into 2014.

#### **Repositioning Our Brand – ECA**

Feedback is essential. The Employers' Consultative Association of Trinidad and Tobago has employed the services of Lucent Research to conduct a survey to members and non-members, to uncover the current perception of the ECA. This research hopes to provide an unbiased opinion of our brand as well as what we represent. This research will be completed in 2014.



#### Membership

Membership continues to be at the forefront for the ECA. 2013 saw some fluctuations in our membership, with 691 members at the close of 2013. There were 48 new member organisations and we warmly welcome them and look forward to serving their needs, while 63 organisations were de-registered for varied reasons, such as mergers and acquisitions and financial constraints. However, the ECA still maintains its loyalty to our members and we wish the best for those that are no longer with us. Through membership, ECA provides expertise industrial relations knowledge, guidance and representation. Also, we make great strides in providing essential platforms that contribute to a balanced discussion on various issues that affect the Industrial Relations climate as well as the business community of Trinidad and Tobago.

#### **Advocacy & Representation**

For 2013, the ECA sat on 14 boards and committees representing our members' interests. In addition, the ECA continues to be a pioneer in Industrial Relations, with a number of articles in local publications in Trinidad and Tobago, some of which are distributed throughout the Caribbean. Also, the ECA produces a quarterly magazine, The Voice, as well as a Radio Series on i95.5 fm, which target areas related to IR/HR issues and are financed through sponsorship from key members. At the start of 2013, the ECA launched its 'Week in Review' Bulletin which outlines key industrial relations activities that appear in the media. This Bulletin has proven to be a great success as many members have expressed gratitude as well as a better understanding of the impact and scope of industrial relations/ conflict in Trinidad and Tobago. The ECA continued its monthly columns in both the Trinidad Express and the Newsday and these received positive reviews.

#### **Employers' Events**

In 2013, the ECA hosted a number of events which were both small and large and were directed to our members and the business community as a whole. Some events took the form of a panel





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discussion where members of government, a trade unionist, Industrial Relations expert, and an employer came together and led a discussion focused on key issues. Other events included the: Anniversary Cruise, Chairman's Dinner, Annual Charity Brunch and Members Appreciation Evening.

The Annual Charity Brunch took place in November 2013 and was held at the Hyatt Regency, Port-of-Spain and carried a Luau theme. The event had an overwhelming response with 400 plus in attendance, the proceeds of which went to the Cotton Tree Foundation - an organisation that promotes education through a variety of afterschool programmes. The ECA wishes to thank all our members for their unstinting support to this event.

In October 2013, the ESC in partnership with the ECA hosted an International Human Resources and Industrial Relations Conference addressing key issues of interest in these areas by renowned international, regional and local speakers.

## SUBSIDIARY; THE EMPLOYERS SOLUTION CENTRE

#### **Training and Development**

The Training & Development Department of the ESC has made quite a statement, not only for the ESC but also for the ECA on a whole. The department continued its activities by offering a variety of programmes and has remained focused on being the main Industrial Relations Trainer in Trinidad and Tobago. Over time the department has been able to gauge the needs of its clients. By honing in on this need, the programmes offered have started to take on a more creative and practical approach with our newest product, allowing participants to gain more insight and knowledge on the topics addressed and brings to life the principles, law and theory covered in our Academy. The ESC has made strides to partner with external universities to have its Industrial Relations Programmes accredited while ensuring that all our programmes are also accredited by the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT).



#### **Industrial Pelations Solutions**

The IR Solution Department provided a significant increase in Industrial Relations Services to employers in 2013, the outstanding area was "Representation at the Industrial Court and Sensitisation Sessions" although the department achieved 90% of its budget it doubled the 2012 figure and created history with the highest revenue to date. In 2014 the IRS will endeavour to increase its market share in other areas such as "collective bargaining and retainer services" while maintaining its share in the areas that were successful in 2013.

#### **Human Resource Solutions**

The Human Resource Solutions (HRS) continued its drive to be the HR department in many small and medium sized companies and did so successfully in 2013 providing retainer services to 9 companies on an on-going basis. Additionally the HRS enhanced many of our member Companies' processes through the development of policy Manuals. In 2014 the department will continue to expand in these areas.

### CONCLUSION

2013 closed on a high for the Employers' Consultative Association and for Employers' Solutions Centre enabling us to enter into 2014 with a great outlook. Industrial Relations remains a constant factor in Trinidad and Tobago and the ECA will continue to build our niche within this environment serving the employers of T&T with ease and expertise.

Our members and stakeholders have allowed the ECA the sustainability that we are able to enjoy today. Our gratitude is unquestionable and we will work feverishly in 2014 to meet the needs of our members and to create vital partnerships to maintain our dedication as the Premier Employer.

- The President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, His Excellency Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona, SC
- The Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development
  - The Honourable Minister Errol Mc Leod
- The President of the Industrial Court of Trinidad and Tobago
  - His Honour Deborah Thomas Felix and Judges of the Industrial Court
- The President of the National Trade Union Centre Senator James Lambert
- The Director of the ILO Sub-regional Office for the Caribbean Dr. Giovanni di Cola
- Specialist for Employers' Activities, ILO Sub-regional Office for the Caribbean - Mrs. Anne Knowles
- The Director of the Bureau for Employers Activities, ILO, Geneva Mr. Deborah France Massin
- The Secretary General of the International Organisation of Employers, Geneva - Mr. Brent Wilton and his Team
- The President of the Caribbean Employers' Confederation Mr. Wayne Chen
- The President of the American Chamber of Commerce Mr. Hugh Howard
- The President of the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Commerce Mr. Moonilal Lalchan
- The President of the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers Association Mr. Nicholas Lok Jack
- The President of the Energy Chamber of Industry and Commerce Mr. Roger Packer
- The Media















