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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UWI economist Pantin promoted to professor

The formal opening of the anniversary conference of the Sustainable Economic Development Unit at UWI on Monday, turned into a warm personal tribute to two academics--one who led the unit for 10 years and the other who was credited with inspiring its formation.

UWI principal Bhoë Tewarie surprised the Engineering lecture theatre gathering with the announcement that Dennis Pantin, senior economist and co-ordinator of SEDU, had just been elevated to professor rank at the university. "I take the opportunity to call him Professor Dennis Pantin!" said Dr Tewarie to loud applause, as he spoke to open the conference and to appraise the career of SEDU, a division of the Social Sciences Faculty.

Speaking later, the new Prof Pantin, a Fatima College old boy who is now also chairman of the Regulated Industries Commission, credited the late John Cropper with the idea for SEDU. He recalled personal ties, starting in the 1970s with his own postgraduate stint as Cropper's research assistant.

A John Cropper Memorial Lecture, by British Prof David Edwards, was to inaugurate an annual series at the conference. In Edwards' absence because of illness, however, Pantin surveyed the work of the UK-born Cropper, who had died in 2001 after 36 years as a leading researcher in Caribbean sustainable development, and acclaimed his widow, Independent Senator Angela Cropper, who was in the audience.

Dr Tewarie noted that Pantin's promotion to professor coincided fittingly with SEDU's tenth anniversary. He commended the "passion, commitment and integrity" with which Pantin had led the unit whose policy-related research covers water security, agriculture, tourism, disaster management, and sustainable livelihoods. The campus principal hailed SEDU as the UWI organisation that works most closely with civil society, a collaboration, he said, that is becoming increasingly important.

In an address, Wayne Hunte, the pro vice chancellor for research, said Pantin had shown not only commitment to sustainable development in the region but had also shown how to make SEDU itself sustainable for ten years. "If you can do that, you good to go," he observed. Reviewing the process by which Pantin had been appointed professor, Prof Hunte described Pantin's career as "atypical" in that he "never bothered to finish his PhD." Consequently, Prof Hunte said, the proposal to promote Pantin to professor had been subjected to "rigorous external review." Reporting the result, Prof Hunte said, "Everyone came back with extremely glowing comment." In his turn, Prof Pantin, describing how John Cropper had influenced his own approach, said, "He went after important, but not careerist work."

The SEDU tenth anniversary conference continued through October 17 at UWI, St Augustine.

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