

Organizational Bullying

Within the trade union movement, bullying in any is frowned upon. It is deemed as an unacceptable act of behaviour which is perpetrated by one person upon another. The word bullying is defined as intimidatory or coercive behaviour. It takes the form of harassment and the issuance of threats. Bullying is basically repeated behaviour. Moreover, it is generally an unacceptable societal problem which is scoffed upon, as it reduces the dignity of the individual.

In the labour movement, the focus on bullying is often directed at what happens within the workplace. The action of bullying in the workplace involves picking on or regularly undermining someone. This also includes derogatory jokes, racial slurs and personal insults, which in the main constitutes harassment. Basically, persistent of mistreatment from others in the workplace that causes either physical or emotional harm is representative of the fact that bullying is taking place. Such tactics as verbal, nonverbal, psychological, and physical abuse, humiliation, offensive conduct and the making of excessive demands are often employed.

Generally, the conversation on bullying tends to evolve around what happens within the workplace and ignores the fact that it takes place within organizations, with trade unions being not excluded. Internal struggles are not unusual within organizations. These attract responses that may relate to perceive misuse of power and positions of authority. This having been said, the act of bullying is not limited to those who hold power and authority, but can also be attributed to those within organizations who apparently have hidden agendas. These is reflected in the actions of individuals, subgroupings or individual organizations, who interest is that of taking control, having their own way or dominating others.

It is no secret that they direct their efforts at exercising influence, intimidating others, making repeated threats; all with the intention to make others feel helpless. Bullies are basically about discrediting others. It would appear that those who find comfort in resorting to such questionable behaviour, are unaware that they are comprising and undermining the very organization of which they are apart.

Trade unions are known to take a principle stance against bullying in the workplace. Moreover, they are very much in the vanguard of promoting policies in the workplace which clearly advance that bullying and harassment are not be tolerated. If it is that preventing workers from being bullied is a priority for trade unions, it

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would seem to be a serious contradiction if it was that within vary levels of the labour movement, there were those who were failing to practice what is being preached. The engaging in constant criticisms both unprovoked and unwarranted, are meant to demoralized the leadership of trade unions, create unnecessary tensions and retard progress from being achieved. This it would appear is malicious and calculated behaviour that only serves the purpose of undermining the organization. This is unseemly and unhealthy behaviour which should be frowned upon and discouraged. As a matter of fact, a no tolerance approach to such indifferent behaviour should be taken.

All corporate, civil society or governmental organizations are known to operate based on rules and guidelines. In the workplace there is a policy document which guides the operations, expectations, responsibilities and discipline of workers. Most civil society organizations are guided by a constitution. Trade unions like other civil society organizations are governed based on a constitution. A constitution is defined as a body of fundamental principles or established precedents according to which a state or other organization is acknowledged to be governed. Coming out the definition, it is established that there are rules, regulations and procedures which persons are expected to follow. It is expected that leaders would recognize that a constitution prides itself on the enforcement of discipline, order and promoting respect for the rules governing the organization.

There can be no doubt that in the management of organizations, differences of opinions on matters are likely to occur. There is nothing wrong with this, but where individuals become offensive and are not prepared to follow the rules and procedures, there is a need to draw the line. There is no place for such indifference and misguided behaviour. Whereas the no tolerance approach is adopted to bullying in the workplace, the same should apply outside of the workplace; where ever it exists. The turning of a blind eye to this behaviour and/ or by attempting not to offend individuals, makes no sense. A clear signal needs to be sent that enough is enough.